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THE  
YOUNG LADY'S  
SUNDAY BOOK



PHILADELPHIA :

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EDWARD C. BIDDLE.



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THE  
**YOUNG LADY'S**  
**SUNDAY BOOK:**

A  
**PRACTICAL MANUAL**

OF THE  
**CHRISTIAN DUTIES OF PIETY, BENEVOLENCE  
AND SELF-GOVERNMENT.**

**PREPARED**  
**WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE FORMATION  
OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER.**

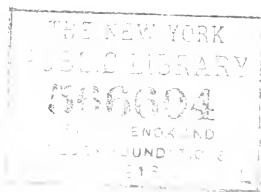
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BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE YOUNG MAN'S OWN BOOK."

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**PHILADELPHIA:**  
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**1836.**



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## PREFACE.

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THE same views which we announced in the preface to the Young Man's Sunday Book, have governed us in the preparation of the present volume. We write for no sect or party in particular, but for all sects and parties, for the universal public ; and it has been our aim in this, as in every previous publication, to admit into our pages no principle or precept which any candid Christian would refuse to sanction.

To others we leave the necessary task of elucidating Christian doctrine by fair and honorable controversy. We rather choose to confine our labors to the practical part of Christianity. If the lucid exposition of Christian precepts, and the eloquent exhortations to the practice of virtue and piety, which we have here collected from some of the most respected writers of both sexes,

shall receive due consideration from those to whom they are addressed, we shall not fail of our reward. We shall receive it in the blessings of those whose feet will be turned from the highway of vanity and folly, into that "path which is illuminated by the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."



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THE  
**Young Lady's Sunday Book.**

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ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN  
RELIGION.

How lamentable it is, that so few hearts should feel the pleasures of real piety ! that prayer and thanksgiving should be performed, as they too often are, not with joy, and love, and gratitude ; but, with cold indifference, melancholy dejection, or secret horror !—It is true, we are all such frail and sinful creatures, that we justly fear to have offended our gracious Father ; but let us remember the condition of his forgiveness : If you have sinned,—‘ sin no more.’ He is ready to receive you whenever you sincerely turn to him ;—and He is ready to assist you, when you do but desire to obey him. Let your devotion, then, be the language of filial love and gratitude ; confide to this kindest of Fathers every want and every wish of your heart :—but submit them all to his will, and freely offer him the disposal of yourself, and of all your affairs. Thank him for his benefits, and even for his punishments,—convinced that these also are benefits, and mercifully designed for your good. Implore his direction in all difficulties ; his assistance in all trials ; his comfort and support in sickness or affliction ; his restraining grace in time of poverty and joy. Do not persist in desiring what his Providence denies you ; but

be assured it is not good for you. Refuse not anything he allots you, but embrace it as the best and properest for you. Can you do less to your heavenly Father than what your duty to an earthly one requires?—If you were to ask permission of your father to do, or to have anything you desire, and he should refuse it to you, would you obstinately persist in setting your heart upon it, notwithstanding his prohibition? would you not say, My father is wiser than I am; he loves me, and would not deny my request, if it were fit to be granted; I will, therefore, banish the thought, and cheerfully acquiesce in his will?—How much rather should this be said of our heavenly Father, whose wisdom can not be mistaken, and whose bountiful kindness is infinite!—Love Him, therefore, in the same manner as you love your earthly parents, but in a much higher degree,—in the highest your nature is capable of. Forget not to dedicate yourself to his service every day; to implore his forgiveness of your faults, and his protection from evil, every night: and this not merely in formal words unaccompanied by any act of the mind, but ‘in spirit and in truth;’ in grateful love, and humble adoration. Nor let these stated periods of worship be your only communication with him; accustom yourself to think often of him, in all your waking hours;—to contemplate his wisdom and power, in the works of his hands;—to acknowledge his goodness in every object of use or of pleasure;—to delight in giving him praise in your inmost heart, in the midst of every innocent gratification,—in the liveliest hour of social enjoyment. You can not conceive, if you have not experienced, how much such silent acts of gratitude and love will enhance every pleasure; nor what

sweet serenity and cheerfulness such reflections will diffuse over your mind. On the other hand, when you are suffering pain or sorrow, when you are confined to an unpleasant situation, or engaged in a painful duty, how will it support and animate you, to refer yourself to your Almighty Father!—to be assured that he knows your state and your intentions; that no effort of virtue is lost in his sight, nor the least of your actions or sufferings disregarded or forgotten!—that his hand is ever over you, to ward off every real evil, which is not the effect of your own ill conduct, and to relieve every suffering that is not useful to your future well-being.

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## PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

IF God be the author of our spiritual life, the root from which we derive the vital principle with daily supplies to maintain this vitality; then the best evidence we can give that we have received something of this principle, is an unreserved dedication of ourselves to the actual promotion of his glory. No man ought to flatter himself that he is in the favor of God, whose life is not consecrated to the service of God. Will it not be the only unequivocal proof of such a consecration, that he be more zealous of good works than those who, disallowing the principles on which he performs them, do not even pretend to be actuated by any such motive?

The finest theory never yet carried any man to Heaven. A religion of notions which occupies the mind, without filling the heart, may obstruct, but can not advance the salvation of men. If these notions are false, they are most pernicious; if true

and not operative, they aggravate guilt ; if unimportant though not unjust, they occupy the place which belongs to nobler objects, and sink the mind below its proper level ; substituting the things which only ought not to be left undone, in the place of those which ought to be done ; and causing the grand essentials not to be done at all. Such a religion is not that which Christ came to teach mankind.

All the doctrines of the gospel are practical principles. The word of God was not written, the Son of God was not incarnate, the spirit of God was not given, only that Christians might obtain right views and possess just notions. Religion is something more than mere correctness of intellect, justness of conception, and exactness of judgment. It is a life-giving principle. It must be infused into the habit, as well as govern the understanding ; it must regulate the will, as well as direct the creed. It must not only cast the opinions into a new frame, but the heart into a new mould. It is a transforming as well as a penetrating principle. It changes the taste, gives activity to the inclinations, and together with a new heart, produces a new life.

Christianity enjoins the same temper, the same spirit, the same dispositions, on all its real professors. The act, the performance, must depend on circumstances which do not depend on us. The power of doing good is withheld from many, from whom, however, the reward will not be withheld. If the external act constituted the whole value of Christian virtue, then must the Author of all good be himself the author of injustice, by putting it out of the power of multitudes to fulfil his own commands. In principles, in tempers, in fervent



desires, in holy endeavors, consist the very essence of Christian duty.

Nor must we fondly attach ourselves to the practice of some particular virtue, or value ourselves exclusively on some favorite quality; nor must we wrap ourselves up in the performance of some individual actions, as if they formed the sum of Christian duty. But we must embrace the whole law of God in all its aspects, bearings and relations. We must bring no fancies, no partialities, no prejudices, no exclusive choice or rejection into our religion, but take it as we find it, and obey it as we receive it, as it is exhibited in the Bible, without addition, curtailment, or adulteration.

Nor must we pronounce on a character by a single action really bad, or apparently good; if so, Peter's denial would render him the object of our execration, while we should have judged favorably of the prudent economy of Judas. The catastrophe of the latter, who does not know? while the other became a glorious martyr to that master whom, in a moment of infirmity, he had denied.

#### SPIRITUALITY.

A piety altogether spiritual, disconnected with all outward circumstances; a religion of pure meditation and abstracted devotion, was not made for so compound, so imperfect a creature as man. There have, indeed, been a few sublime spirits, not 'touched but rapt,' who, totally cut off from the world, seem almost to have literally soared above this terrene region, who almost appear to have stolen the fire of the Seraphim, and to have had no business on earth, but to keep alive the

celestial flame. They would, however, have approximated more nearly to the example of their divine master, the great standard and only perfect model, had they combined a more diligent discharge of the active duties and benefices of life with their high devotional attainments.

But while we are in little danger of imitating, let us not too harshly censure the pious error of these sublimated spirits. Their number is small. Their example is not catching. Their ethereal fire is not likely, by spreading, to inflame the world. The world will take due care not to come in contact with it, while its distant light and warmth may east, accidentally, a not unuseful ray on the cold-hearted and the worldly.

But from this small number of refined but inoperative beings, we do not intend to draw our notions of practical piety. God did not make a religion for these few exceptions to the general state of the world, but for the world at large; for beings active, busy, restless; whose activity he, by his word, diverts into its proper channels; whose busy spirit is there directed to the common good; whose restlessness, indicating the unsatisfactoriness of all they find on earth, he points to a higher destination. Were total seclusion and abstraction designed to have been the general state of the world, God would have given man other laws, other rules, other faculties, and other employments.

There is a class of visionary but pious writers who seem to shoot as far beyond the mark, as mere moralists fall short of it.—Men of low views and gross minds may be said to be wise *below* what is written, while those of too subtle refinement are wise *above* it. The former grovel in the

dust from the inertness of their intellectual faculties: while the latter are lost in the clouds by stretching them beyond their appointed limits. The former build spiritual castles in the air, instead of erecting them on the 'holy ground' of Scripture; the latter lay their foundation in the sand, instead of resting it on the Rock of Ages. Thus, the superstructure of both is equally unsound.

God is the fountain from which all the streams of goodness flow; the centre from which all the rays of blessedness diverge.—All our actions are, therefore, only good, as they have a reference to Him: the streams must revert back to their fountain, the rays must converge again to their centre.

#### THE LOVE OF GOD.

If love of God be the governing principle, this powerful spring will actuate all the movements of the rational machine. The essence of religion does not so much consist in actions as affections. Though right actions, therefore, as from an excess of courtesy they are commonly termed, may be performed where there are no right affections; yet are they a mere carcass; utterly destitute of the soul, and, therefore, of the substance of virtue. But neither can affections substantially and truly subsist without producing right actions: for never let it be forgotten that a pious inclination which has not life and vigor sufficient to ripen into act when the occasion presents itself, and a right action which does not grow out of a sound principle, will neither of them have any place in the account of real goodness. A good inclination will

be contrary to sin, but a mere inclination will not subdue sin.

The love of God, as it is the source of every right action and feeling, so it is the only principle which necessarily involves the love of our fellow-creatures. As man we do not love man. There is a love of partiality but not of benevolence ; of sensibility but not of philanthropy ; of friends and favorites, of parties and societies, but not of man collectively. It is true we may, and do, without this principle, relieve his distresses, but we do not bear with his faults. We may promote his fortune, but we do not forgive his offences ; above all, we are not anxious for his immortal interests. We could not see him want without pain, but we can see him sin without emotion. We could not hear of a beggar perishing at our door without horror, but we can, without concern, witness an acquaintance dying without repentance. Is it not strange that we must participate something of the divine nature, before we can really love the human ? It seems, indeed, to be an insensibility to sin, rather than want of benevolence to mankind, that makes us naturally pity their temporal and be careless of their spiritual wants ; but does not this very insensibility proceed from the want of love to God ?

#### HABITUAL FEELING.

As it is the habitual frame, and predominating disposition, which are the true measure of virtue, incidental good actions are no certain criterion of the state of the heart ; for who is there, who does not occasionally do them ? Having made some progress in attaining this disposition, we must not sit down satisfied with propensities and inclina-

tions to virtuous actions, while we rest short of their actual exercise. If the principle be that of sound Christianity, it will never be inert. While we shall never do good with any great effect, till we labor to be conformed, in some measure, to the image of God; we shall best evince our having obtained something of that conformity, by a course of steady and active obedience to God.

Every individual should bear in mind, that he is sent into this world to act a part in it. And though one may have a more splendid, and another a more obscure part assigned him, yet the actor of each is equally, is awfully accountable. Though God is not a hard, he is an exact master. His service, though not a severe, is a reasonable service. He accurately proportions his requisitions to his gifts. If he does not expect that one talent should be as productive as five, yet to a single talent a proportionable responsibility is annexed.

He who has said 'Give me thy heart,' will not be satisfied with less; he will not accept the praying lips, nor the mere hand of charity as substitutes.

A real Christian will be more just, sober, and charitable than other men, though he will not rest for salvation on justice, sobriety, or charity. He will perform the duties they enjoin, in the spirit of Christianity, as instances of devout obedience, as evidences of a heart devoted to God.

All virtues, it can not be too often repeated, are sanctified or unhallowed according to the principle which dictates them; and will be accepted or rejected accordingly. This principle kept in due exercise, becomes a habit, and every act strengthens the inclination; adding vigor to the principle and pleasure to the performance.

We can not be said to be real Christians, till re-

ligion become our animating motive, our predominating principle and pursuit, as much as worldly things are the predominating motive, principle, and pursuit of worldly men.

#### NEW CONVERTS.

New converts, it is said, are most zealous, but they are not always the most persevering. If their tempers are warm, and they have only been touched on the side of their passions, they start eagerly, march rapidly, and are full of confidence in their own strength. They too often judge others with little charity, and themselves with little humility. While they accuse those who move steadily, of standing still, they fancy their own course will never be slackened. If their conversion be not solid, religion, in losing its novelty, loses its power. Their speed declines. Nay, it will be happy if their motion become not retrograde. Those who are truly sincere, will commonly be persevering. If their speed is less eager, it is more steady. As they know their own heart more, they discover its deceitfulness, and learn to distrust themselves. As they become more humble in spirit, they become more charitable in judging. As they grow more firm in principle, they grow more exact in conduct.

The rooted habits of a religious life may indeed lose their prominence because they are become more indented. If they are not embossed, it is because they are burnt in. Where there is uniformity and consistency in the whole character, there will be little relief in an individual action. A good deed will be less striking in an established Christian than a deed less good in one who has been previously careless; good actions being his

expected duty and his ordinary practice. Such a Christian indeed, when his right habits cease to be new and striking, may fear that he is declining: but his quiet and confirmed course is a surer evidence than the more early starts of charity, or fits of piety, which may have drawn more attention, and obtained more applause.

#### SELF-DENIAL.

Again ;—We should cultivate most assiduously, because the work is so difficult, those graces which are most opposite to our natural temper; the value of our good qualities depending much on their being produced by the victory over some natural wrong propensity. The implantation of a virtue is the eradication of a vice. It would cost one man more to keep down a rising passion than to do a brilliant deed. It will try another more to keep back a sparkling but corrupt thought, which his wit had suggested but which religion checks, than it would to give a large sum in charity. A real Christian being deeply sensible of the worthlessness of any actions which do not spring from the genuine fountain, will aim at such an habitual conformity to the divine image, that to perform all acts of justice, charity, kindness, temperance, and every kindred virtue, may become the temper, the habitual, the abiding state of his heart; that like natural streams they may flow spontaneously from the living source.

Practical Christianity then, is the actual operation of Christian principles. It is lying on the watch for occasion to exemplify them. It is ‘exercising ourselves unto godliness.’ A Christian can not tell in the morning, what opportunities he

may have of doing good during the day ; but if he be a real Christian, he can tell that he will try to keep his heart open, his mind prepared, his affections alive to do whatever may occur in the way of duty. He will, as it were, stand in the way to receive the orders of Providence. Doing good is his vocation. Nor does the young artisan bind himself by firmer articles to the rigid performance of his master's work, than the indentured Christian to the active service of that Divine Master, who himself ' went about doing good.' He rejects no duty which comes within the sphere of his calling, nor does he think the work he is employed in a good one, if he might be doing a better. His having well acquitted himself of a good action, is so far from furnishing him with an excuse for avoiding the next, that it is a new reason for his embarking in it. He looks not at the work which he has accomplished ; but on that which he has to do. His views are always prospective. His charities are scarcely limited by his power. His will knows no limits. His fortune may have bounds : his benevolence has none. He is, in mind and desire, the benefactor of every miserable man. His heart is open to all the distressed ; to the household of faith it overflows. Where the heart is large, however small the ability, a thousand ways of doing good will be invented. Christian charity is a great enlarger of means. Christian self-denial negatively accomplishes the purposes of the favorites of fortune in the fables of the nursery—if it can not fill the purse by a wish, it will not empty it by a vanity. It provides for others by abridging from itself. Having carefully defined what is necessary and becoming, it allows of no encroachment on its definition. Superfluities



it will lop, vanities it will cut off. The deviser of liberal things will find means of effecting them, which to the indolent appear incredible, to the covetous impossible. Christian beneficence takes a large sweep. That circumference cannot be small of which God is the centre. Nor does religious charity in a Christian stand still because not kept in motion by the main-spring of the world. Money may fail, but benevolence will be going on. If he can not relieve want, he may mitigate sorrow. He may warn the inexperienced, he may instruct the ignorant, he may confirm the doubting. The Christian will find out the cheapest way of *being* good as well as of *doing* good. If he can not give money, he may exercise a more difficult virtue; he may forgive injuries. Forgiveness is the economy of the heart. A Christian will find it cheaper to pardon than to resent. Forgiveness saves expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits. It also puts the soul into a frame, which makes the practice of other virtues easy. The achievement of a hard duty is a great abolisher of difficulties. If great occasions do not arise, he will thankfully seize on small ones. If he can not glorify God by serving others, he knows that he has always something to do at home; some evil temper to correct, some wrong propensity to reform, some crooked practice to straighten. He will never be at a loss for employment, while there is a sin or misery in the world; he will never be idle, while there is a distress to be relieved in another, or a corruption to be cured in his own heart. We have employment assigned to us for every circumstance in life. When we are alone, we have our thoughts to watch: in the family, our tempers; in company, our tongues.

## GOD'S EXAMPLE.

What an example of disinterested goodness and unbounded kindness have we in our heavenly Father, who is merciful over all his works ; who distributes common blessings without distinction ; who bestows the necessary refreshments of life, the shining sun and the refreshing shower, without waiting, as we are apt to do, for personal merit, or attachment or gratitude ; who does not look out for desert, but want, as a qualification for his favors ; who does not afflict willingly, who delights in the happiness, and desires the salvation of all his children ; who dispenses his daily munificence and bears with our daily offences ; who, in return for our violation of his laws, supplies our necessities ; who waits patiently for our repentance, and even solicits us to have mercy on our own souls !

## CHRIST'S EXAMPLE.

What a model for our humble imitation is that Divine person who was clothed with our humanity ; who dwelt among us that the pattern being brought near might be rendered more engaging, the conformity be made more practicable ; whose whole life was one unbroken series of universal charity ; who in his complicated bounties never forgot that man is compounded of both soul and body ; who, after teaching the multitude, fed them ; who repulsed none for being ignorant ; was impatient with none for being dull ; despised none for being contemned by the world ; rejected none for being sinners ; who encouraged those whose importunity others censured ; who in healing sickness converted souls ; who gave bread and forgave injuries !

It will be the endeavor of the sincere Christian, to illustrate his devotions in the morning by his actions during the day. He will try to make his conduct a practical exposition of the divine prayer which made a part of them. He will desire to hallow the name of God, to promote the enlargement and the 'coming' of the 'kingdom' of Christ. He will endeavor to do and to suffer his whole will; 'to forgive' as he himself trusts that he is forgiven. He will resolve to avoid that 'temptation' into which he had been praying 'not to be led;' and he will labor to shun the 'evil' from which he had been begging to be 'delivered.' He thus makes his prayers as practical as the other parts of his religion; and labors to render his conduct as spiritual as his prayers. The commentary and the text are of reciprocal application.

If this gracious Saviour has left us a perfect model for our devotion in his prayer, he has left a model no less perfect for our practice in his sermon. This Divine exposition has been sometimes misunderstood. It was not so much a supplement to a defective law, as the restoration of the purity of a perfect law from the corrupt interpretations of its blind expounders. These persons had ceased to consider it as forbidding the principle of sin, and as only forbidding the act. Christ restores it to its original meaning, spreads it out on its due extent, shows the largeness of its dimensions and the spirit of its institution. He unfolds all its motions, tendencies and relations. Not contenting himself, as human legislators are obliged to do, to prohibit a man the act which is injurious to others, but the inward temper which is prejudicial to himself.

There can not be a more striking instance, how

emphatically every doctrine of the gospel has a reference to practical goodness, than is exhibited by St. Paul in that magnificent picture of the resurrection, in his epistle to the Corinthians, which the church has happily selected, for the consolation of survivors at the last closing scene of mortality. After an inference as triumphant as it is logical, that because 'Christ is risen, we shall rise also;' after the most philosophical illustration of the raising of the body from the dust, by the process of grain sown in the earth, and by the springing up into a new mode of existence; after describing the subjugation of all things to the Redeemer, and his laying down the mediatorial kingdom; after sketching with a seraph's pencil, the relative glories of the celestial and terrestrial bodies; after exhausting the grandest images of created nature, and the dissolution of nature itself;—after such a display of the solemnities of the great day, as makes this world, and all its concerns shrink into nothing: in such a moment, when, if ever, the rapt spirit might be supposed too highly wrought for precept and admonition, the apostle, wound up as he was by the energies of inspiration, to the immediate view of the glorified state—the last trumpet sounding—the change from mortal to immortality effected in the twinkling of an eye—the sting of death drawn out—victory snatched from the grave—then, by a turn as surprising as it is beautiful, he draws a conclusion as unexpectedly practical as his premises were grand and awful: '*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord.*' Then at once, by another quick transition, resorting from the duty to the reward, and winding up the whole with an argu-

ment as powerful, as his rhetoric had been sublime, he adds—‘Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.’

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## PRAYER.

PRAYER is the application of want to him who only can relieve it; the voice of sin to him who alone can pardon it. It is the urgency of poverty, the prostration of humility, the fervency of penitence, the confidence of trust. It is not eloquence, but earnestness: not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but compunction of soul. It is the ‘Lord save us or we perish’ of drowning Peter; the cry of faith to the ear of mercy.

Adoration is the noblest employment of created beings; confession the natural language of guilty creatures; gratitude the spontaneous expression of pardoned sinners.

Prayer is desire. It is not a conception of the mind, nor a mere effort of the intellect, nor an act of the memory; but an elevation of the soul towards its Maker; a pressing sense of our own ignorance and infirmity, a consciousness of the perfections of God, of his readiness to hear, of his power to help, of his willingness to save.

It is not an emotion produced in the senses; nor an effect wrought by the imagination; but a determination of the will, an effusion of the heart.

Prayer is the guide to self-knowledge by prompting us to look after our sins in order to pray against them; a motive to vigilance, by teaching us to guard against those sins which, through self-examination, we have been enabled to detect.

Prayer is an act both of the understanding and

of the heart. The understanding must apply itself to the knowledge of the divine perfections, or the heart will not be led to the adoration of them. It would not be a *reasonable* against serious piety, one is, that it teaches men service if the mind was excluded. It must be rational worship, or the human worshipper would not bring to the service the distinguished faculty of his nature, which is reason. It must be spiritual worship; or it would want the distinctive quality to make it acceptable to Him, who has declared that He will be worshipped 'in spirit and in truth.'

Prayer is right in itself as the most powerful means of resisting sin and advancing in holiness. It is above all right, as every thing is, which has the authority of Scripture, the command of God, and the example of Christ.

There is a perfect consistency in all the ordinations of God; a perfect congruity in the whole scheme of his dispensations. If man were not a corrupt creature, such prayer as the gospel enjoins would not have been necessary. Had not prayer been an important means for curing those corruptions, a God of perfect wisdom would not have ordered it. He would not have prohibited every thing which tends to inflame and promote them, had they not existed, nor would he have commanded every thing that has a tendency to diminish and remove them, had not their existence been fatal. Prayer, therefore, is an indispensable part of his economy and our obedience.

It is a hackneyed objection to the use of prayer that it is offending the omniscience of God to suppose he requires information of our wants. But no objection can be more futile. We do not pray to inform God of our wants, but to express our

sense of the wants which he already knows. As he has not so much made his promise to our necessities, as to our requests, it is reasonable that our requests should be made before we can hope that our necessities will be relieved. God does not promise to those who want that they shall 'have,' but to those who 'ask;' nor to those who need that they shall 'find,' but to those who 'seek.' So far therefore from his previous knowledge of our wants being a ground of objection to prayer, it is in fact the true ground for our application. Were he not knowledge itself, our information would be of as little use as our application would be, were he not goodness itself.

We can not attain a just notion of prayer while we remain ignorant of our own nature, of the nature of God as revealed in Scripture, of our relation to him and dependence on him. If therefore we do not live in the daily study of the holy scriptures, we shall want the highest motives to this duty and the best helps for performing it; if we do, the cogency of these motives, and the inestimable value of these helps, will render argument unnecessary and exhortation superfluous.

One cause therefore of the dullness of many Christians in prayer, is, their slight acquaintance with the sacred volume. They hear it periodically, they read it occasionally, they are contented to know it historically, to consider it superficially, but they do not endeavor to get their minds imbued with its spirit. If they store their memory with its facts, they do not impress their hearts with its truths. They do not regard it as the nutriment on which their spiritual life and growth depend. They do not pray over it; they do not consider all its doctrines as of practical applica-

tion; they do not cultivate that spiritual discernment which alone can enable them judiciously to appropriate its promises and its denunciations to their own actual case. They do not apply it as an unerring line to ascertain their own rectitude or obliquity.

In our retirements, we too often fritter away our precious moments, moments rescued from the world, in trivial, sometimes it is to be feared, in corrupt thoughts. But if we must give the reins to our imagination, let us send this excursive faculty to range among great and noble objects. Let it stretch forward under the sanction of faith and the anticipation of prophecy, to the accomplishment of those glorious promises and tremendous threatenings which will soon be realized in the eternal world. These are topics which under the safe and sober guidance of Scripture, will fix its largest speculations and sustain its loftiest flights. The same Scripture, while it expands and elevates the mind, will keep it subject to the dominion of truth; while at the same time it will teach it that its boldest excursions must fall infinitely short of the astonishing realities of a future state.

Though we can not pray with a too deep sense of sin, we may make our sins too exclusively the object of our prayers. While we keep, with a self-abasing eye, our own corruptions in view, let us look with equal intenseness on that mercy, which cleanseth from all sin. Let our prayers be all humiliation, but let them not be all complaint. When men indulge no other thought but that they are rebels, the hopelessness of pardon hardens them into disloyalty. Let them look to the mercy of the king, as well as to the rebellion of the subject. If we contemplate his grace as displayed in



the gospel, then, though our humility will increase, our despair will vanish. Gratitude in this as in human instances will create affection. ‘We love him because he first loved us.’

Let us then always keep our unworthiness in view as a reason why we stand in need of the mercy of God in Christ; but never plead it as a reason why we should not draw nigh to him to implore that mercy. The best men are unworthy for their own sakes; the worst on repentance will be accepted for his sake and through his merits.

SAINT PAUL ON PRAYER, THANKSGIVING, AND  
RELIGIOUS JOY.

Prayer is an act which seems to be so prepared in the frame of our nature; to be so congenial to our dependent condition, so suited to our exigencies, so adapted to every man’s known wants, and to his possibilities of wants unknown; so full of relief to the soul, and of peace to the mind, and of gladness to the heart; so productive of confidence in God, and so reciprocally proceeding from that confidence, that we should think, if we did not know the contrary, that it is a duty which scarcely required to be enjoined; that he who had once found out his necessities, and that there was no other redress for them, would spontaneously have recourse as a delight, to what he had neglected as a command; that he who had once tasted the bounties of God, would think it hardship not to be allowed to thank him for them; that the invitation to pray to his Benefactor, was an additional proof of Divine goodness; that to be allowed to praise him for his mercies, was itself a mercy.

The apostle's precept, 'pray always,'—pray evermore, pray without ceasing, men ought always to pray,—will not be criticised as a pleonasm, if we call to remembrance that there is no state of mind, no condition of life, in which prayer is not a necessity as well as an obligation. In danger, fear impels to it; in trouble, we have no other resource; in sickness, we have no other refuge; in dejection, no other hope; in death, no other comfort.

Saint Paul frequently shows the word *prayer* to be a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. He represents it to include our adoration of his perfections, our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, of our obligation for his benefits, providential and spiritual; of the avowal of our entire dependence on him, of our absolute subjection to him, the declaration of our faith in him, the expression of our devotedness to him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences; for succor in our distress; for a blessing on our undertakings; for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs.

If any should be disposed to think this general view too comprehensive, let him point out which of these particulars prayer does not embrace; which of these clauses, a rational, a sentient, an enlightened, a dependent being can omit in his scheme of devotion.

But as the multifarious concerns of human life will necessarily occasion a suspension of the exercise, Saint Paul, ever attentive to the principles of the act, and to the circumstances of the actor, re-

duces all these qualities to their essence, when he resolves them into the *spirit* of supplication.

To pray incessantly, therefore, appears to be, in his view of the subject, to keep the mind in an habitual disposition and propensity to devotion; for there is a sense in which we may be said to *do* that which we are *willing* to do, though there are intervals of thought, as well as intermissions of the act. 'As a traveller,' says Dr. Barrow, 'may be said to be still on his journey, though he stops to take needful rest, and to transact necessary business.' If he pause, he does not turn out of the way; his pursuit is not diverted, though occasionally interrupted.

Constantly maintaining the disposition, then, and never neglecting the actual duty; never slighting the occasion which presents itself, nor violating the habit of stated devotion, may, we presume, be called 'to pray without ceasing.' The expression 'watching unto prayer,' implies this vigilance in finding, and this zeal in laying hold on these occasions.

The success of prayer, though promised to all, who offer it in perfect sincerity, is not so frequently promised to the cry of distress, to the impulse of fear, or the emergency of the moment, as to humble continuance in devotion. It is to patient waiting, to assiduous solicitation, to unwearied importunity, that God has declared that he will lend his ear, that he will give the communication of his Spirit, that he will grant the return of our requests. Nothing but this holy perseverance can keep up in our minds an humble sense of our dependence. It is not by a mere casual petition, however passionate, but by habitual application, that devout affections are excited and maintained;

that our converse with heaven is carried on. It is by no other means that we can be assured, with Saint Paul, that 'we are risen with Christ,' but this obvious one, that we thus seek the things which are above; that the heart is renovated; that the mind is lifted above this low scene of things; that the spirit breathes in a purer atmosphere; that the whole man is enlightened, and strengthened, and purified; and that the more frequently, so the more nearly, he approaches to the throne of God. He will find also, that prayer not only expresses, but elicits the Divine grace.

Yet do we not allow every idle plea, every frivolous pretence, to divert us from our better resolves? Business brings in its grave apology; pleasure its bewitching excuse. But if we would examine our hearts truly, and report them faithfully, we should find the fact to be, that disinclination to this employment, oftener than our engagement in any other, keeps us from this sacred intercourse with our Maker.

Under circumstances of distress, indeed, prayer is adopted with comparatively little reluctance: the mind, which knows not where to fly, flies to God. In agony, nature is no atheist. The soul is drawn to God by a sort of natural impulse; not always, perhaps, by an emotion of piety; but from a feeling conviction, that every other refuge is 'a refuge of lies.' Oh! thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, happy if thou art either drawn or driven, with holy David, to say to thy God, 'Thou art a place to hide me in.'

But if it is easy for the sorrowing heart to give up a world, by whom itself seems to be given up, there are other demands for prayer, equally imperative. There are circumstances more dangerous,

yet less suspected of danger, in which, though the call is louder, it is less heard; because the voice of conscience is drowned by the clamors of the world. Prosperous fortunes, unbroken health, flattering friends, buoyant spirits, a spring-tide of success—these are the occasions when the very abundance of God's mercies is apt to fill the heart till it hardens it. Loaded with riches, crowned with dignities, successful in enterprise; beset with snares in the shape of honors, with perils under the mask of pleasures; then it is, to the already saturated heart, 'to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant,' is more in unison than 'what shall I render to the Lord?'

Men of business, especially men in power and public situations, are in no little danger of persuading themselves, that the affairs which occupy their time and mind, being, as they really are, great and important duties, exonerate those who perform them from the necessity of the same strictness in devotion, which they allow to be right for men of leisure; and which, when they become men of leisure themselves, they are resolved to adopt;—but now is the accepted time, here is the accepted place, however they may be tempted to think that an exact attention to public duty, and an unimpeachable rectitude in discharging it, is itself a substitute for the offices of piety.

But these great and honorable persons are the very men to whom superior cares, and loftier duties, and higher responsibilities, render prayer even more necessary, were it possible, than to others. Nor does this duty trench upon other duties, for the compatibilities of prayer are universal. It is an exercise which has the property of incorporating itself with every other; not only not impeding,

but advancing it. If secular thoughts, and vain imaginations, often break in on our devout employments, let us allow religion to vindicate her rights, by uniting herself with our worldly occupations. There is no crevice so small at which devotion may not slip in; no other instance of so rich a blessing being annexed to so easy a condition; no other case in which there is any certainty, that to ask is to have. This the suitors to the great do not always find so easy from them, as the great themselves find from God.

Not only the elevation on which they stand makes this fence necessary for their personal security, by enabling them to bear the height without giddiness, but the guidance of God's hand is so essential to the operations they conduct, that the public prosperity, no less than their own safety, is involved in the practice of habitual prayer. God will be more likely to bless the hand which steers, and the head which directs, when both are ruled by the heart which prays. Happily we need not look out of our own age or nation for instances of public men, who, while they govern the country, are themselves governed by a religious principle; who petition the Almighty for direction, and praise him for success.

The duty which Paul enjoins—'praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance,'—would be the surest means to augment our love to God. We gradually cease to love a benefactor of whom we cease to think. The frequent recollection would warm our affections, and we should more cordially devote our lives to him to whom we should more frequently consecrate our hearts. The apostle

therefore inculcates prayer, not only as an act, but as a frame of mind.

In all his writings effectual prayer uniformly supposes accompanying preparatory virtue. Prayer draws all the Christian graces into its focus. It draws Charity, followed by her lovely train—of forbearance with faults, forgiveness of injuries, pity for errors, and relieving of wants. It draws Repentance, with her holy sorrows, her pious resolutions, her self-distrust. It attracts Faith, with her elevated eye—Hope, with her grasped anchor—Beneficence, with her open hand—Zeal, looking far and wide to serve—Humility, with introverted eye, looking at home. Prayer, by quickening these graces in the heart, warms them into life, fits them for service, and dismisses each to its appropriate practice. Prayer is mental virtue: virtue is spiritual action. The mould into which genuine prayer casts the soul, is not effaced by the suspension of the act, but retains some touches of the impression till the act is repeated.

Prayer, divested of the love of God, will obtain nothing, because it asks nothing cordially. It is only the interior sentiment that gives life and spirit to devotion. To those who possess this, prayer is not only a support, but a solace: to those who want it, it is not only an insipid task, but a religious penalty. Our apostle everywhere shows that purity of heart, resignation of spirit, peace and joy in believing, can, by no other expedient, be maintained in life, activity, and vigor. Prayer so circumstanced is the appointed means for drawing down the blessing we solicit, and the pardon we need.

## IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

IF there exist a Supreme Being, the Creator of the world, no consequence appears more natural and direct than this, that he ought to be worshipped by his creatures with every outward expression of submission and honor. We need only appeal to every man's heart, whether this be not a principle which carries along with it its own obligation, that to Him who is the fountain of our life and the Father of our mercies; to Him who has raised up that beautiful structure of the universe in which we dwell, and where we are surrounded with so many blessings and comforts; solemn acknowledgments of gratitude should be made, praises and prayers should be offered, and all suitable marks of dependence on him be expressed.—This obligation extends beyond the silent and secret sentiments of our hearts. Besides private devotion, it naturally leads to associations for public worship; to open and declared professions of respect for the Deity. Where blessings are received in common, an obligation lies upon the community, jointly to acknowledge them. Sincere gratitude is always of an open and diffusive nature. It loves to pour itself forth; to give free vent to its emotions; and, before the world, to acknowledge and honor a benefactor.

So consonant is this to the natural sentiments of mankind, that all the nations of the earth have, as with one consent, agreed to institute some forms of worship; to hold meetings at certain times in honor of their deities. Survey the societies of men in their rudest state; explore the African deserts, the wilds of America, or the distant islands of the ocean; and you will find that over all the earth



some religious ceremonies have obtained. You will everywhere trace, in one form or other, the temple, the priest, and the offering. The prevalence of the most absurd superstitions furnishes this testimony to the truth, that in the hearts of all men the principle is engraved of worship being due to that invisible Power who rules the world.—Herein consists the great excellency of the Christian religion, that it hath instructed us in the simple and spiritual nature of that worship. Disencumbered of idle and unmeaning ceremonies, its ritual is pure and worthy of a Divine Author. Its positive institutions are few in number, most significant of spiritual things, and directly conducive to good life, and practice. How inexcusable then are we, if, placed in such happy circumstances, the sense of those obligations to the public worship of God shall be obliterated among us which the light of nature has inculcated, in some measure, on the most wild and barbarous nations!

The refinements of false philosophy have indeed suggested this shadow of objection, that God is too great to stand in need of any external service from his creatures; that our expressions of praise and honor are misplaced with respect to him who is above all honor and all praise; that in his sight, the homage we seek to pay must appear contemptible; and is therefore in itself superfluous and trifling.—But who hath taught those vain reasoners that all expressions of gratitude and honor towards a superior become unsuitable, merely because that superior needs not any returns? Were they ever indebted to one whose favors they had it not in their power to repay; and did they, on that account, feel themselves let loose from every obligation to acknowledge and to praise their

benefactor? On the contrary, the more disinterested his beneficence was, did not gratitude, in any ingenuous mind, burn with the greater ardor, and prompt them the more eagerly to seize every opportunity of publicly testifying the feelings of their hearts?—Almighty God, it is true, is too great to need their service or homage. But he is also too good not to accept it when it is the native expression of a grateful and generous mind. If pride and self-sufficiency stifle all sentiments of dependence on our Creator; if levity and attachment to worldly pleasures render us totally neglectful of expressing our thankfulness to him for his blessings; do we not hereby discover such a want of proper feeling, such a degree of hardness and corruption in our affections, as shows us to be immoral and unworthy; and must justly expose us to the high displeasure of Heaven? On the contrary, according to every notion which we can form of the Father of the universe, must it not be acceptable to him to behold his creatures properly affected in heart towards their great Benefactor; assembling together to express in acts of worship that gratitude, love, and reverence which they owe him; and thus nourishing and promoting in one another an affectionate sense of his goodness? Are not such dispositions, and such a behavior as this, intimately connected with all virtue?

*O come, let us worship and bow down! let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God; and we are the flock of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. The prayer of the upright is his delight. It cometh before him as incense, and the uplifting of their hands as the evening sacrifice.*

## UTILITY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

When we survey the general state of mankind, we find them continually immersed in worldly affairs ; busied about providing the necessaries of life, occupied in the pursuit of their pleasures, or eagerly prosecuting the advancement of their interests. In such a situation of things, a small measure of reflection might convince any one that without some returns of sacred days, and some solemn calls to public worship, it were impossible to preserve in the world any sense of objects so foreign to the general current of thought as an invisible Governor and a future state. If it be of importance to the peace and good order of society that there should prevail among men the belief of One in the heavens, who is the protector of righteousness and the avenger of crimes ; if it be of importance that they be taught to look forward to a day of judgment, when they are to be brought to account for their most secret actions, and eternally rewarded or punished according as their conduct has been good or evil ; if such principles as these, I say, be of consequence to the public welfare, they certainly enforce the authority of public worship, and prove the necessity of religious instruction.

I speak now particularly with a view to the multitude, the great mass and body of the people. We all know how seldom, from education or private instruction, they have the advantage of deriving sentiments of religion or morality. Early obliged to labor for their bread, they would remain all their days in gross ignorance of every moral or sacred principle, were it not for those public assemblies in which they hear of God, and Christ,

and judgment, and heaven, and hell. Shut up those temples to which they resort with reverence ; exclude them from the opportunities they now possess of receiving religious instruction, and imbibing religious ideas ; and what can you expect them to become ? No other than a ferocious rabble, who, set free from checks of conscience and fears of divine vengeance, would be prone to every outrage which they could commit with impunity. It is well known that in the early ages of the world, sages and legislators, who endeavored to tame and to associate the barbarous hordes of men, found it necessary for this purpose to have recourse to religion. By bringing the rude multitudes to worship together, and at stated times and places to join in hymns and songs to their deities, they gradually restrained them from violence, and trained them to subordination and civilized life.

During the progress of society in after periods, religious assemblies at church continue, I am persuaded, to have a very considerable influence on the civilization and improvement of the people. Even independent of effect upon their moral principles, by leading numbers of them to meet together in an orderly way and in their most decent appearance, they tend to humanize and polish their manners. They strengthen the social connexions, and promote friendly intercourse among those who are in the same neighborhood, and in the same lines of life. It must, at the same time, be agreeable to every human mind to think that one day in seven is allotted for rest to the poor from their daily labors, and for such enjoyments of ease and comfort as their station affords. It is the only day which gives them occasion to feel themselves as belonging to the same class of beings with their

superiors; when joining with them in the same acts of worship, and recognizing a common Lord. Amidst those distinctions which the difference of ranks necessarily introduces into human society, it is surely fit that there be some occasions when man can meet with man as a brother, in order that the pride of the great may be checked, and the low may be taught that if they discharge properly their appointed part, they have reason to expect from the Lord of the universe the same rewards with the rich and the mighty.

It will, I believe, be generally admitted that forms of public worship and means of religious instruction are important, on several accounts, for the body of the people, and belong to the maintenance of public safety and order. But many who admit this are apt to think that to the common people alone they may be left. To persons of liberal education and enlarged minds, what benefit can arise from hearing what they already know; and what, perhaps, is to be inculcated on them by those who are of inferior capacity to themselves? —Admitting this plea of superiority which their vanity forms, and setting aside for the present any personal obligations they are under to worship God, I must ask such persons how they can expect that religious assemblies will be long respected by the lower ranks of men, if by men of rank and education they are discountenanced and forsaken? Do not they know that those lower ranks are ready to copy the manners and to follow the example of their superiors in all things; but assuredly in nothing more than in what appears to set them free from restraint, and to gratify licentiousness? While they acknowledge the importance and even the necessity of public religion to certain classes

of men, do they nevertheless contribute by their behavior to defeat the end of public religion, and to annihilate that importance which they ascribe to it?—They are employed in framing laws and statutes for preventing crimes, and keeping the disorderly multitude within bounds; and at the same time, by personally discountenancing public worship, they are weakening, they are even abolishing among the multitude, that moral restraint which is of more general influence upon manners than all the laws they frame. In vain they complain of the dishonesty of servants, of the insolence of mobs, of the attacks of the highwayman. To all these disorders they have themselves been accessory. By their open disregard of sacred institutions they have disseminated profligacy among the people; they have broken down the flood-gates which served to restrain the torrent; they have let it loose to overflow the land; and by the growing deluge may themselves be swept away.

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### ON PROVIDENCE.

It is not easy to conceive a more deplorable state of mind, than to live in a disbelief of God's providential government of the world. To be threatened with troubles, and to see no power which can avert them; to be surrounded with sorrows, and discern no hand which can redress them, to labor under oppression or calumny, and believe there is no friend to relieve, and no judge to vindicate us; to live in a world, of which we believe its ruler has abdicated the throne, or delegated the direction to chance; to suspect that he has made

over the triumph to injustice, and the victory to impiety; to suppose that we are abandoned to the casualties of nature, and the domination of wickedness; to behold the earth a scene of disorder, with no superintendent to regulate it; to hear the storms beating, and see the tempests spreading desolation around, with no influence to direct, and no wisdom to control them; all this would render human life a burden intolerable to human feeling. Even a heathen, in one of those glimpses of illumination which they seemed occasionally to catch, could say, *it would not be worth while to live in a world which was not governed by Providence.*

But, as soon as we clearly discern the mind which appoints, and the hand which governs all events, we begin to see our way through them: as soon as we are brought to recognize God's authority, and to confide in his goodness, we can say to our unruly hearts, what he said to the tempestuous waves, *Peace, be still.* Though all is perplexity, we know who can reduce confusion into order: once assured of the protection of the Supreme Intelligence, we shall possess our souls in patience, and resign our will with submission. As soon as this conviction is fully established, we become persuaded that a being of infinite love would never have placed us in a scene beset with so many trials, and exposed to so many dangers, had he not intended them as necessary materials, by which, under his guidance, we are to work out our future happiness;—as so many warnings not to set up our rest here;—as so many incentives to draw us on in pursuit of that better state to which eternal mercy is conducting us through this thorny way.

To keep God habitually in view, as the end of all our aims, and the disposer of all events—to see

him in all our comforts, to admire the benignity with which he imparts them—to adore the same substantial, though less obvious mercy, in our afflictions—to acknowledge at once the unwillingness with which he dispenses our trials, and the necessity of our suffering them—to view him in his bounties of creation, with a love which makes every creature pleasant—to regard him in his providential direction, with a confidence which makes every hardship supportable—to observe the subserviency of events to his eternal purposes: all this solves difficulties otherwise insuperable, vindicates the divine conduct, composes the intractable passions, settles the wavering faith, and quickens the too reluctant gratitude.

The fabled charioteer, who usurped his father's empire for a day, is not more illustrative of *their* presumption, who, virtually snatching the reins of government from God, would involve the earth in confusion and ruin, than the denial which the ambitious suppliant received to his mad request, is applicable to the goodness of God in refusing to delegate his power to his creatures; *My son, the very tenderness I show in denying so ruinous a petition, is the purest proof that I am indeed thy father.*

Sounds to which we are accustomed, we fancy have a definite sense. But we often fancy it unjustly; for familiarity alone can not give meaning to what is in itself unintelligible. Thus many words, without any determinate and precise meaning, pass current in common discourse. Some talk of those chimerical beings, nature, fate, chance, and necessity, as positively as if they had a real existence, and of almighty power and direction as if they had none.



In speaking of ordinary events as fortuitous, or as natural, we dispossess Providence of one half of his dominion. We assign to him the credit of great and avowedly supernatural operations, because we know not how else to dispose of them. For instance: we ascribe to him power and wisdom in the creation of the world, while we talk as if we thought that the keeping it in order might be effected by an inferior agency. We sometimes speak as if we assigned the government of the world to two distinct beings: whatever is awful only, and out of the common course, we ascribe to God, as revolutions, volcanoes, earthquakes. We think the dial of Ahaz going backwards, the sun stationary on Gibeon, marvels worthy of Omnipotence; but when we stop here, is it not virtually saying, that to maintain invariable order, unbroken regularity, perpetual uniformity, and systematic beauty in the heavens and the earth, does not exhibit equally striking proofs of infinite superintendence?

Many seem to ascribe to chance the common circumstances of life, as if they thought it would be an affront to the Almighty to refer them to him; as if it were unbecoming his dignity to order the affairs of beings whom he thought it no derogation of that dignity to create. It looks as if, while we were obliged to him for making us, we would not wish to cumber him with the care of us. But the gracious Father of the universal family thinks it no dishonor to watch over the concerns, to supply the wants, and dispose the lot of creatures who owe their existence to his power, and their redemption to his mercy. He did not create his rational subjects in order to neglect

them, or to turn them over to another, a capricious, an imaginary power.

We do not, it is true, so much arraign his general providence, as his particular appointments. We will allow the world to be nominally his, if he will allow us our opinion in respect to his management of certain parts of it. Now, that he should not put forth the same specific energy individually to direct as to create, is supposing an anomaly in the character of the all-perfect God—Whatever was his design in the formation of the world and its inhabitants, the same reason would, beyond a doubt, influence him in their superintendence and preservation.—David, in describing the simple grandeur of omnipotent benignity, sets us a beautiful pattern. He does not represent the belief of God's providential care as an effort, but describes our continual sustenance as the necessary unlabored effect of infinite power and goodness. *He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness*; thus making our blessings, rather, as it were, a result, than an operation.

And as we are not under the divided control of a greater and a subordinate power, so neither are we, as the Persian mythology teaches, the subjects of two equal beings, each of whom distributes respectively good and evil according to his peculiar character and province. Nor are we the sport of the conflicting atoms of one school, nor of the fatal necessity of another. There is one omnipotent, omniscient, perfect, supreme Intelligence, who disposes of every person and of every thing according to the counsel of his own infinitely holy will. 'The help that is done upon earth, God doth it himself.' The comprehensive mind, enlightened by Christian faith, discovers the same harmony

and design in the course of human events, as the philosopher perceives in the movements of the material system.

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## SELF-EXAMINATION.

IN this age of general inquiry, every kind of ignorance is esteemed dishonorable. In almost every sort of knowledge there is a competition for superiority. Intellectual attainments are never to be undervalued. Learning is the best human thing. All knowledge is excellent as far as it goes, and as long as it lasts. But how short is the period before 'tongues shall cease, and knowledge shall vanish away!'

Shall we then esteem it dishonorable to be ignorant in anything which relates to life and literature, to taste and science, and not feel ashamed to live in ignorance of our own hearts?

To have a flourishing estate, and a mind in disorder; to keep exact accounts with a steward, and no reckoning with our Maker; to have an accurate knowledge of loss or gain in our business, and to remain utterly ignorant whether our spiritual concerns are improving or declining; to be cautious in ascertaining at the end of every year how much we have increased or diminished our fortune, and to be careless whether we have incurred profit or loss in faith and holiness, is a wretched miscalculation of the comparative value of things. To bestow our attention on objects in an inverse proportion to their importance, is surely no proof that our learning has improved our judgment.

That deep thinker and acute reasoner, Dr. Barrow, has remarked that 'it is a peculiar excellency

of human nature, and which distinguishes man from the inferior creatures more than bare reason itself, that he can reflect upon all that is done within him, can discern the tendencies of his soul, and is acquainted with his own purposes.'

This distinguishing faculty of self-inspection would not have been conferred on man, if it had not been intended that it should be in habitual operation. It is surely, as we before observed, as much a common law of prudence, to look well to our spiritual as to our worldly possessions. We have appetites to control, imaginations to restrain, tempers to regulate, passions to subdue; and how can this internal work be effected, how can our thoughts be kept within due bounds, how can a proper bias be given to the affections, how can 'the little state of man' be preserved from continual insurrection, how can this restraining power be maintained, if this capacity of discerning, if this faculty of inspection, be not kept in regular exercise? Without constant discipline, imagination will become an outlaw, conscience an attainted rebel.

This inward eye, this power of introversion, is given us for a continual watch upon the soul. On an unremitted vigilance over its interior motions, those fruitful seeds of action, those prolific principles of vice and virtue, will depend both the formation and the growth of our moral and religious character. A superficial glance is not enough for a thing so deep, an unsteady view will not suffice for a thing so wavering, nor a casual look for a thing so deceitful as the human heart. A partial inspection on any one side, will not be enough for an object which must be observed under a variety

of aspects, because it is always shifting its positions, always changing its appearances.

We should examine not only our conduct, but our opinions; not only our faults, but our prejudices; not only our propensities, but our judgments. Our actions themselves will be obvious enough; it is our intentions which require the scrutiny. These we should follow up to their remotest springs, scrutinize to their deepest recesses, trace through their most perplexing windings. And lest we should, in our pursuit, wander in uncertainty and blindness, let us make use of that guiding clue which the Almighty has furnished by his word and by his spirit, for conducting us through the intricacies of this labyrinth. 'What I know not, teach thou me,' should be our constant petition in all our researches.

Did we turn our thoughts inward, it would abate much of the self-complacency with which we swallow the flattery of others. Flattery hurts not him who flatters not himself. If we examine our motives keenly, we should frequently blush at the praises our actions receive. Let us then conscientiously inquire not only what we do, but whence and why we do it, from what motive, and to what end.

Self-inspection is the only means to preserve us from self-conceit. We could not surely so very extravagantly value a being whom we ourselves should not only see, but feel to be so full of faults. Self-acquaintance will give us a far more deep and intimate knowledge of our own errors than we can possibly have, with all the inquisitiveness of an idle curiosity, of the errors of others. We are eager enough to blame them, without knowing their motives. We are no less eager to vindicate

ourselves, though we can not be entirely ignorant of our own. Thus two virtues will be acquired by the same act, humility and candor; an impartial review of our own infirmities, being the likeliest way to make us tender and compassionate to those of others.

Nor shall we be liable so to overrate our own judgment, when we perceive that it often forms such false estimates, is so captivated with trifles, so elated with petty successes, so dejected with little disappointments. When we hear others commend our charity which we know is so cold; when others extol our piety which we feel to be so dead; when they applaud the energies of our faith, which we must know to be so faint and feeble, we cannot possibly be so intoxicated with the applauses which never would have been given, had the applauder known us as we know, or ought to know ourselves. If we contradict him, it may be only to draw on ourselves the imputation of a fresh virtue, humility, which perhaps we as little deserve to have ascribed to us as that which we have been renouncing. If we keep a sharp look-out, we should not be proud of praises which cannot apply to us, but should rather grieve at the involuntary fraud of imposing on others, by tacitly accepting a character to which we have so little real pretension. To be delighted at finding that people think so much better of us than we are conscious of deserving, is in effect to rejoice in the success of our own deceit.

We shall also become more patient, more forbearing and forgiving, shall better endure the harsh judgment of others respecting us, when we perceive that their opinion of us nearly coincides with our own real, though unacknowledged sentiments.

There is much less injury incurred by others thinking too ill of us, than in our thinking too well of ourselves.

It is evident then, that to live at random, is not the life of a rational, much less of an immortal, least of all, of an accountable being. To pray occasionally, without a deliberate course of prayer; to be generous without proportioning our means to our expenditure; to be liberal without a principle; to let the mind float on the current of public opinion; lie at the mercy of events, for the probable occurrence of which we have made no provision; to be every hour liable to death without any habitual preparation for it; to carry within us a principle which we believe will exist through all the countless ages of eternity, and yet to make little inquiry whether that eternity is likely to be happy or miserable—all this is an inconsiderateness which, if adopted in the ordinary concerns of life, would bid fair to ruin a man's reputation for common sense: yet of this infatuation he who lives without self-examination is absolutely guilty.

Nothing more plainly shows us what weak vacillating creatures we are, than the difficulty we find in fixing ourselves down to the very self-scrutiny we had deliberately resolved on. Like the worthless Roman emperor we retire to our closet under the appearance of serious occupation, but might now and then be surprised, if not in catching flies, yet in pursuits nearly as contemptible. Some trifle which we should be ashamed to dwell upon at any time, intrudes itself on the moments dedicated to serious thought; recollection is interrupted; the whole chain of reflection broken, so that the scattered links can not again be united. And so inconsistent are we that we are sometimes

not sorry to have a plausible pretence for interrupting the very employment in which we had just before made it a duty to engage. For want of this home acquaintance, we remain in utter ignorance of our inability to meet even the ordinary trials of life with cheerfulness; indeed by this neglect we confirm that inability. Nursed in the lap of luxury, we have an indefinite notion that we have but a loose hold on the things of this world, and of the world itself. But let some accident take away, not the world, but some trifle on which we thought we set no value while we possessed it, and we find to our astonishment that we hold, not the world only, but even this trivial possession, with a pretty tight grasp. Such detections of our self-ignorance, if they do not serve to wean, ought at least to humble us.

There is a spurious sort of self-examination which does not serve to enlighten but to blind. A person who has left off some notorious vice, who has softened some shades of a glaring sin, or substituted some outward forms in the place of open irreligion, looks on this change of character with pleasure. He compares himself with what he was, and views the alteration with self-complacency. He deceives himself by taking his standard from his former conduct, or from the character of still worse men, instead of taking it from the unerring rule of Scripture. He looks rather at the discredit than the sinfulness of his former life, and being more ashamed of what is disreputable than grieved at what is vicious, he is, in this state of shallow reformation, more in danger in proportion as he is more in credit. He is not aware that it is not having a fault or two less that



will carry him to heaven, while his heart is still glued to the world and estranged from God.

If we ever look into our hearts at all, we are naturally most inclined to it when we think we have been acting right. Here inspection gratifies self-love. We have no great difficulty in directing our attention to an object, when that object presents us with pleasing images. But it is a painful effort to compel the mind to turn in on itself, when the view only presents subjects for regret and remorse. This painful duty however must be performed, and will be more salutary in proportion as it is less pleasant.—Let us establish it into a habit to ruminate on our faults. With the recollection of our virtues we need not feed our vanity. They will, if that vanity does not obliterate them, be recorded elsewhere.

We are always disposed to look at those parts of our character which will best bear it, and which consequently least need it: at those parts which afford most self-gratulation. If a covetous man, for instance, examines himself, instead of turning his attention to the peccant part, he applies the probe where he knows it will not go very deep; he turns from his avarice to that sobriety of which his very avarice is perhaps the source. Another, who is the slave of passion, fondly rests upon some act of generosity, which he considers as a fair commutation for some favorite vice, that would cost him more to renounce than he is willing to part with. We are all too much disposed to dwell on that smiling side of the prospect which pleases and deceives us, and to shut our eyes upon that part which we do not choose to see, because we are resolved not to quit. Self-love always holds a screen between the superficial self-examiner and

his faults. The nominal Christian wraps himself up in forms which he makes himself believe are Religion. He exults in what he does, overlooks what he ought to do, nor ever suspects that what is done at all can be done amiss.

As we are so indolent that we seldom examine a truth on more than one side, so we generally take care that it shall be that side which shall confirm some old prejudices. While we will not take pains to correct those prejudices and to rectify our judgment, lest it should oblige us to discard a favorite opinion, we are yet as eager to judge, and as forward to decide, as if we were fully possessed of the grounds on which a sound judgement may be made, and a just decision formed.

We should watch ourselves whether we observe a simple rule of truth and justice, as well in our conversation, as in our ordinary transactions; whether we are exact in our measures of commendation and censure; whether we do not bestow extravagant praise where simple approbation alone is due; whether we do not withhold commendation, where, if given, it would support modesty and encourage merit; whether what deserves only a slight censure as imprudent, we do not reprobate as immoral; whether we do not sometimes affect to overrate ordinary merit, in the hope of securing to ourselves the reputation of candor, that we may on other occasions, with less suspicion, depreciate established excellence. We extol the first because we fancy that it can come into no competition with us, and we derogate from the last because it obviously eclipses us.

Let us ask ourselves if we are conscientiously upright in our estimation of benefits; whether when we have a favor to ask, we do not depreciate

its value, when we have one to grant we do not aggravate it.

It is only by scrutinizing the heart that we can know it. It is only by knowing the heart that we can reform the life. Any careless observer, indeed, when his watch goes wrong, may see that it does so, by casting an eye on the dial plate ; but it is only the artist who takes it to pieces and examines every spring and every wheel separately, and who, by ascertaining the precise causes of the irregularity, can set the machine right, and restore the obstructed movements.

The illusions of intellectual vision would be materially corrected by a close habit of cultivating an acquaintance with our hearts. We fill much too large a space in our own imaginations ; we fancy we take up more room in the world than Providence assigns to an individual who has to divide his allotment with so many millions, who are all of equal importance in their own eyes ; and who, like us, are elbowing others to make room for themselves. Just as in the natural world, where every particle of matter would stretch itself, and move out of its place, if it were not kept in order by surrounding particles ; the pressure of other parts reduces this to remain in a confinement from which it would escape, if it were not thus pressed and acted upon on all sides. The conscientious practice we have been recommending, would greatly assist in reducing us to our proper dimensions, and in limiting us to our proper place. We should be astonished if we could see our real diminutiveness, and the speck we actually occupy. When shall we learn from our own feelings of how much consequence every man is to himself ?

Nor must the examination be occasional, but regular. Let us not run into long arrears, but settle our accounts frequently. Little articles will run up to a large amount, if they are not cleared off. Even our *innocent* days, as we may choose to call them, will not have passed without furnishing their contingent—our deadness in devotion—our eagerness for human applause—our care to conceal our faults rather than to correct them—our negligent performance of some relative duty—our imprudence in conversation, especially at table—our inconsideration—our driving to the very edge of permitted indulgences—let us keep these—let us keep all our numerous items in small sums. Let us examine them while the particulars are fresh in our memory; otherwise, however we may flatter ourselves that lesser evils will be swallowed up by the greater, we may find when we come to settle the grand account that they will not be the less remembered for not having been recorded.

And let it be one subject of our frequent inquiry, whether since we last scrutinized our hearts, our secular affairs, or our eternal concerns have had the predominance there. We do not mean which of them has occupied most of our time, the largest portion of which must, necessarily, to the generality, be absorbed in the cares of the present life; but on which our affections have been most bent; and especially how we have conducted ourselves when there has arisen a competition between the interests of both.

That general burst of sins which so frequently rushes in on the consciences of the dying, would be much moderated by previous habitual self-examination. It will not do to repeat in the lump.

The sorrow must be as circumstantial as the sin. Indefinite repentance is no repentance. And it is one grand use of self-inquiry, to remind us, that all unforsaken sins are unrepented sins.

To a Christian there is this substantial comfort attending a minute self-inspection, that when he finds fewer sins to be noted, and more victories over temptation obtained; he has a solid evidence of his advancement, which well repays his trouble.

The faithful searcher into his own heart, that 'chamber of imagery,' feels himself in the situation of the prophet,\* who being conducted in vision from one idol to another, the spirit at sight of each, repeatedly exclaims, 'here is another abomination!' The prophet being commanded to dig deeper, the further he penetrated the more evils he found, while the spirit continued to cry out, 'I will show thee yet more abomination.'

Self-examination by detecting self-love, self-denial by weakening its power, self-government by reducing its despotism, turns the temper of the soul from its natural bias, controls the disorderly appetite, and, under the influence of Divine Grace, in a good measure restores to the man that dominion over himself which God at first gave him over the inferior creatures. Desires, passions, and appetites, are brought to move somewhat more in their appointed order; subjects not tyrants. What the stoics vainly pretended to, Christianity effects. It restores man to a dominion over his own will, and in a good measure enthrones him in that empire which he had forfeited by sin.

He now begins to survey his interior, the awful

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\* Ezekiel.

world within; not indeed with self-complacency but with the control of a sovereign; he still finds too much rebellion to indulge security, he therefore continues his inspection with vigilance, but without perturbation. He continues to experience a remainder of insubordination and disorder, but this rather solicits to a stricter government than drives him to relax his discipline.

This self-inspection somewhat resembles the correction of a literary performance. After many and careful revisals, though some grosser faults may be done away; though the errors are neither quite so numerous, nor so glaring as at first, yet the critic perpetually perceives faults which he had not perceived before; negligences appear which he had overlooked, and even defects start up which had passed on him for beauties. He finds much to amend, and even to expunge, in what he had before admired. When by rigorous castigation the most acknowledged faults are corrected, his critical acumen, improved by exercise, and a more habitual acquaintance with his subjects, still detects, and will for ever detect, new imperfections. But he neither throws aside his work, nor remits his criticisms, which if it do not make the work perfect, will at least make the author humble; conscious that if it is not quite so bad as it was, it is still at an immeasurable distance from the required excellence.

Is it not astonishing that we should go on repeating periodically, 'Try me, O God,' while we are yet neglecting to try ourselves? Is there not something more like defiance than devotion to invite the inspection of Omniscience to that heart which we ourselves neglect to inspect? How can a Christian solemnly cry out to the Almighty,

‘seek the ground of my heart, prove me and examine my thoughts, and see if there be any ways of wickedness in me,’ while he himself neglects to ‘examine his heart,’ is afraid of ‘proving his thoughts,’ and dreads to inquire if there ‘be any way of wickedness’ in himself, knowing that the inquiry ought to lead to the expulsion.

In our self-inquisition let us fortify our virtue by a rigorous exactness in calling things by their proper names. Self-love is particularly ingenious in inventing disguises of this kind. Let us lay them open, strip them bare, face them, and give them as little quarter as if they were the faults of another. Let us not call wounded pride delicacy.—Self-love is made up of soft and sickly sensibilities. Not that sensibility which melts at the sorrows of others, but that which can not endure the least suffering itself. It is alive in every pore, where self is concerned. A touch is a wound. It is careless in inflicting pain, but exquisitely awake in feeling it. It defends itself before it is attacked, revenges affronts before they are offered, and resents as an insult the very suspicion of an imperfection.

In order then to unmask our hearts, let us not be contented to examine our vices, let us examine our virtues also, ‘those smaller faults.’ Let us scrutinize to the bottom those qualities and actions which have more particularly obtained public estimation. Let us inquire if they were genuine in the principle, simple in the intention, honest in the prosecution. Let us ask ourselves if in some admired instances our generosity had no tincture of vanity, our charity no taint of ostentation? Whether when we did such a right action which brought us credit, we should have persisted in doing

it, had we foreseen that it would incur censure. Do we never deceive ourselves by mistaking a constitutional indifference of temper for Christian moderation? Do we never construe our love of ease into deadness of the world? Our animal activity into Christian zeal? Do we never mistake our obstinacy for firmness, our pride for fortitude, our selfishness for feeling, our love of controversy for the love of God, our indolence of temper for superiority to human applause?—When we have stripped our good qualities bare; when we have made all due deductions for natural temper, easiness of disposition, self-interest; desire of admiration; of every extrinsic appendage, every illegitimate motive, let us fairly cast up the account, and we shall be mortified to see how little there will remain. Pride may impose itself upon us, even in the shape of repentance. The humble Christian is grieved at his faults, the proud man is angry at them.—He is indignant when he discovers he has done wrong, not so much because his sin offends God, as because it has let him see that he is not quite so good as he had tried to make himself believe.

It is more necessary to excite us to the humbling of our pride, than to the performance of certain good actions: the former is more difficult, as it is less pleasant. That very pride will of itself stimulate to the performance of many things that are laudable. These performances will reproduce pride, as they were produced by it; whereas humility has no outward stimulus. Divine grace alone produces it. It is so far from being actuated by the love of fame, that it is not humility, till it has laid the desire of fame in the dust.

If an actual virtue consists, as we have frequently had occasion to observe, in the dominion over the



contrary vice, humility is the conquest over pride, charity over selfishness: not only a victory over the natural temper, but a substitution of the opposite quality. This proves that all virtue is founded in self-denial, self-denial in self-knowledge, and self-knowledge in self-examination. Pride so insinuates itself in all we do, and say, and think, that our apparent humility has not seldom its origin in pride. That very impatience which we feel at the perception of our faults is produced by the astonishment at finding that we are not perfect.—This sense of our sins should make us humble, but not desperate. It should teach us to distrust every thing in ourselves, and to hope for every thing from God. The more we lay open the wounds which sin has made, the more earnestly shall we seek the remedy which Christianity has provided.

But instead of seeking for self-knowledge, we are glancing about us for grounds of self-exultation! We almost resemble the Pharisee, who with so much self-complacency delivered in the catalogue of his own virtues and other men's sins, and, like the Tartars, who think they possess the qualities of those they murder, fancied that the sins of which he accused the publican would swell the amount of his own good deeds. Like him we take a few items from memory, and a few more from imagination. Instead of pulling down the edifice which pride has raised, we are looking round on our good works for buttresses to prop it up. We excuse ourselves from the imputation of many faults, by alleging that they are common, and by no means peculiar to ourselves. This is one of the weakest of our deceits. Faults are not less personally ours because others commit them. There is divisibility in sin, as well as in matter.

Is it any diminution of our error, that others are guilty of the same ?

Self love being a very industrious principle, has generally two concerns in hand at the same time. It is as busy in concealing our own defects, as in detecting those of others, especially those of the wise and good. We might indeed direct its activity in the latter instance to our own advantage, for if the faults of good men are injurious to themselves, they might be rendered profitable to us, if we were careful to convert them to their true use. But instead of turning them into a means of promoting our own watchfulness, we employ them mischievously in two ways. We lessen our respect for pious characters when we see the infirmities which are blended with their fine qualities, and we turn their failings into a justification of our own, which are not like theirs overshadowed with virtues. To admire the excellences of others without imitating them is fruitless admiration ; to condemn their errors without avoiding them is unprofitable censoriousness.

When we are compelled by our conscience to acknowledge and regret any fault we have recently committed, this fault so presses upon our recollection, that we seem to forget that we have any other. This single error fills our mind, and we look at it as through a telescope, which, while it shows an object, confines the sight to that one object exclusively. Others indeed are more effectually shut out, than if we were not examining this. Thus while the object in question is magnified, the others are as if they did not exist.

It seems to be established into a kind of system not to profit by anything without us, and not to cultivate an acquaintance with anything within us.

Though we are perpetually remarking on the defects of others, yet when does the remark lead us to study and to root out the same defects in our own hearts? We are almost every day hearing of the death of others, but does it induce us to reflect on death as a thing in which we have an individual concern? We consider the death of a friend as a loss, but seldom apply it as a warning. The death of others we lament, the faults of others we censure; but how seldom do we make use of the one for our own amendment, or of the other for our own preparation.

It is the fashion of the times to try experiments in the arts, in agriculture, in philosophy. In every science the diligent professor is always afraid there may be some secret which he has not yet attained, some occult principle which would reward the labor of discovery, something even which the assiduous and intelligent have actually found out, but which has hitherto eluded *his* pursuit. And shall the Christian stop short in his scrutiny, shall he not examine and inquire till he lays hold on the very heart and core of religion?

Why should experimental philosophy be the prevailing study, and experimental religion be branded as the badge of enthusiasm, the cant of a hollow profession? Shall we never labor to establish the distinction between appearance and reality, between studying religion critically, and embracing it practically, between having our conduct creditable and our hearts sanctified? Shall we not aspire to do the best things from the highest motives, and elevate our aims with our attainments? Why should we remain in the vestibule when the sanctuary is open? Why should we be contented to dwell in the outer courts when we

are invited to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus?

Natural reason is not likely to furnish arguments sufficiently cogent, nor motives sufficiently powerful to drive us to a close self-inspection. Our corruptions foster this ignorance. To this they owe their undisputed possession of our hearts. No principle short of Christianity is strong enough to impel us to a study so disagreeable as that of our faults. Of Christianity, humility is the prime grace, and this grace can never take root and flourish in a heart that lives in ignorance of itself. If we do not know the greatness and extent of our sins, if we do not know the imperfections of our virtues, the fallibility of our best resolutions, the infirmity of our purest purposes, we can not be humble; if we are not humble, we can not be Christians.

But it may be asked, is there to be no end to this vigilance? Is there no assigned period when this self-denial may become unnecessary? No given point when we may be emancipated from this vexatious self-inspection? Is the matured Christian to be a slave to the same drudgery as the novice? The true answer is—we may cease to watch, when our spiritual enemy ceases to assail. We may be off our guard when there is no longer any temptation without. We may cease our self-denial when there is no more corruption within. We may give the reins to our imagination when we are sure its tendencies will be towards heaven. We may dismiss repentance when sin is abolished. We may indulge selfishness when we can do it without danger to our souls. We may neglect prayer when we no longer need the favor of God. We may cease to praise him when

he ceases to be gracious to us.—To discontinue our vigilance at any period short of this, will be to defeat all the virtues we have practised on earth, to put to hazard all our hopes of happiness in heaven.

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### ON SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL.

To desire to know the Divine will is the first duty of a being so ignorant as man; to endeavor to obey is the most indispensable duty of a being at once so corrupt and so dependent. The Holy Scriptures frequently comprise the essence of the Christian temper in some short aphorism, apostrophe, or definition. The essential spirit of the Christian life may be said to be included in this one brief petition of the Christian's prayer, 'THY WILL BE DONE;' just as the distinguishing characteristic of the irreligious man may be said to consist in following his own will.

There is a haughty spirit which, though it will not complain, does not care to submit. It arrogates to itself the dignity of enduring, without any claim to the meekness of yielding. Its silence is stubbornness, its fortitude is pride; its calmness is apathy without, and discontent within. In such characters, it is not so much the will of God which is the rule of conduct, as the scorn of pusillanimity. Not seldom indeed the mind puts in a claim for a merit to which the nerves could make out a better title. Yet the suffering which arises from acute feeling is so far from deducting from the virtue of resignation, that, when it does not impede the sacrifice, it enhances the value. True resignation is the hardest lesson in the whole school of Christ. It is the oftenest taught and the

latest learnt. It is not a task which, when once got over in some particular instance, leaves us master of the subject. The necessity of following up the lesson we have begun, presents itself almost every day in some new shape, occurs under some fresh modification. The submission of yesterday does not exonerate us from the resignation of to-day. The principle, indeed, once thoroughly wrought into the soul, gradually reconciles us to the frequent demand for its exercise, and renders every successive call more easy.

We read dissertations on this subject, not only with the most entire concurrence of the judgment, but with the most apparent acquiescence of the mind. We write essays upon it in the hour of peace and composure, and fancy that what we have discussed with so much ease and self-complacence, in favor of which we offer so many arguments to convince, and so many motives to persuade, cannot be very difficult to practise. But to convince the understanding and to correct the will is a very different undertaking; and not less difficult when it comes to our own case than it was in the case of those for whom we have been so coolly and dogmatically prescribing. It is not till we practically find how slowly our own arguments produce any effect on ourselves that we cease to marvel at their inefficacy on others. The sick physician tastes with disgust the bitterness of the draught, to the swallowing of which he wondered the patient had felt so much repugnance, and the reader is sometimes convinced by the arguments which fail of their effects on the writer, when he is called, not to discuss, but to act, not to reason, but to suffer. The theory is so just and the duty so obvious, that even bad men assent to it; the ex-

ercise so trying that the best men find it more easy to commend the rule than adopt it. But he who has once gotten engraved, not in his memory, but in his heart, this divine precept, *THY WILL BE DONE*, has made a proficiency which will render all subsequent instruction comparatively easy.

Though sacrifices and oblations were offered to God under the law by his own express appointment, yet he peremptorily rejected them by his prophets, when presented as substitutes instead of signs. Will he, under a more perfect dispensation, accept of any observances which are meant to supersede internal dedication—of any offerings unaccompanied by complete desire of acquiescence in his will? ‘My son, give me thine heart,’ is his brief but imperative command. But before we can be brought to comply with the spirit of this requisition, God must enlighten our understanding that our devotion may be rational, he must rectify our will that it may be voluntary, he must purify our heart that it may be spiritual.

Submission is a duty of such high and holy import that it can only be learnt of the Great Teacher. If it could have been acquired by mere moral institution, the wise sayings of the ancient philosophers would have taught it. But their most elevated standard was low: their strongest motives were the brevity of life, the instability of fortune, the dignity of suffering virtue, things within their narrow sphere of judging; things true indeed as far as they go, but a substratum by no means equal to the superstructure to be built on it. It wanted depth, and strength, and solidity, for the purposes of support. It wanted the only true basis, the assurance that God orders all things according to the purposes of his will for our final good; it

wanted that only sure ground of faith by which the genuine Christian cheerfully submits in entire dependence on the promises of the Gospel.

Nor let us fancy that we are to be languid and inactive recipients of the divine dispensations. Our own souls must be enlarged, our own views must be ennobled, our own spirit must be dilated. An inoperative acquiescence is not all that is required of us : and if we must not slacken our zeal in doing good, so we must not be remiss in opposing evil, on the flimsy ground that God has permitted evil to infest the world. If it be his will to permit sin, it is an opposition to his will when we do not labor to counteract it. This surrender, therefore, of our will to that of God, takes in a large sweep of actual duties, as well as the whole compass of passive obedience. It involves doing as well as suffering, activity as well as acquiescence, zeal as well as forbearance. Yet the concise petition daily slips off the tongue without our reflecting on the weight of the obligation we are imposing on ourselves. We do not consider the extent and consequences of the prayer we are offering, the sacrifices, the trials, the privations it may involve, and the large indefinite obedience to all the known and unknown purposes of infinite wisdom to which we are pledging ourselves.

There is no case in which we more shelter ourselves in generalities. Verbal sacrifices cost little, cost nothing. The familiar habit of repeating the petition almost tempts us to fancy that the duty is as easy as the request is short. We are ready to think that a prayer rounded off in four monosyllables can scarcely involve duties co-extensive with our whole course of being ; that, in uttering them, we renounce all right in ourselves, that we ac-



knowledge the universal indefeasible title of *the blessed and only Potentate*; that we make over to him the right to do in us, and with us, and by us, whatever he sees good for ourselves, whatever will promote his glory, though by means sometimes as incomprehensible to our understanding as unacceptable to our will, because we neither know the motive, nor perceive the end. These simple words express an act of faith the most sublime, an act of allegiance the most unqualified, and, while they make a declaration of entire submission to a Sovereign the most absolute, they are, at the same time, a recognition of love to a Father the most beneficent.

We must remember, that in offering this prayer, we may, by our own request, be offering to resign what we most dread to lose, to give up what is dear to us as our own soul; we may be calling on our heavenly Father to withhold what we are most anxiously laboring to attain, and to withdraw what we are most sedulously endeavoring to keep. We are solemnly renouncing our property in ourselves, we are distinctly making ourselves over again to Him whose we already are. We specifically entreat him to do with us what he pleases, to mould us to a conformity to his image, without which we shall never be resigned to his will. In short, to dispose of us as his infinite wisdom sees best, however contrary to the scheme which our blindness has laid down as the path to unquestionable happiness.

To render this trying petition easy to us, is one great reason why God, by such a variety of providences, afflicts and brings us low. He knows that we want incentives to humility, even more than incitements to virtuous actions. He shows us in

many ways, that self-sufficiency and happiness are incompatible, that pride and peace are irreconcilable; that, following our own way, and doing our own will, which we consider to be of the very essence of felicity, is in direct opposition to it.

'Christianity,' says bishop Horsey, 'involves many paradoxes but no contradictions.' To be able to say with entire surrender of the heart, 'Thy will be done,' is the true liberty of the children of God, that liberty with which Christ has made them free. It is a liberty, not which delivers us from restraint, but which, freeing us from our subjection to the senses, makes us find no pleasure but in order, no safety but in the obedience of an intelligent being to his rightful Lord. In delivering us from the heavy bondage of sin, it transfers us to the 'easy yoke of Christ,' from the galling slavery of the world to the 'light burden' of him who overcame it.

This liberty, in giving a true direction to the affections, gives them amplitude as well as elevation. The more unconstrained the will becomes, the more it fixes on the object; once fixed on the highest, it does not use its liberty for versatility, but for constancy; not for change, but for fidelity; not for wavering, but adherence.

It is, therefore, no less our interest, than our duty, to keep the mind in an habitual posture of submission. 'Adam,' says Dr. Hammond, 'after his expulsion, was a greater slave in the wilderness than he had been in the inclosure.' If the barbarian ambassador came express to the Romans to negotiate from his country for permission to be their servants, declaring, that a voluntary submission, even to a foreign power, was preferable to a wild and disorderly freedom, well may the Chris-

tian triumph in the peace and security to be attained by a complete subjugation to Him who is emphatically called *the God of order*.

A vital faith manifests itself in vital acts. 'Thy will be done,' is eminently a practical petition. The first indication of the jailer's change of heart was a practical indication. He did not ask, 'Are there few that be saved,' but, 'What shall *I* do to be saved?' The first symptom St. Paul gave of his conversion, was a practical symptom: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' He entered on his new course with a total renunciation of his own will. It seemed to this great Apostle, to be the turning point between infidelity and piety, whether he should follow his own will or the will of God. He did not amuse his curiosity with speculative questions. His own immediate and grand concern engrossed his whole soul. Nor was his question a mere hasty effusion, an interrogative springing out of that mixed feeling of awe and wonder which accompanied his first overwhelming convictions. It became the abiding principle which governed his future life, which made him in labors more abundant. Every successive act of duty, every future sacrifice of ease, sprung from it, was influenced by it. His own will, his ardent, impetuous, fiery will, was not merely subdued, it was extinguished. His powerful mind indeed lost none of its energy, but his proud heart relinquished all its independence.

We allow and adopt the term *devotion* as an indispensable part of religion, because it is supposed to be limited to the act; but *devotedness*, from which it is derived, does not meet with such ready acceptance, because this is a habit, and a habit involves more than an act; it pledges us to consis

tency, fixedness of character, a general confirmed state of mind, a giving up what we are, and have, and do, to God. Devotedness does not consist in the length of our prayers, nor in the number of our good works, for, though these are the surest evidences of piety, they are not its essence. Devotedness consists in doing and suffering, bearing and forbearing in the way which God prescribes. The most inconsiderable duty performed with alacrity, if it oppose our own inclination; the most ordinary trial met with a right spirit, is more acceptable to him than a greater effort of our own devising. We do not commend a servant for his activity, if ever so fervently exercised, in doing whatever gratifies his own fancy: we do not consider his performance as obedience, unless his activity has been exercised in doing what we required of him. Now, how can we insist on his doing what contradicts his own humor, while we allow ourselves to feel repugnance in serving our heavenly Master, when his commands do not exactly fall in with our own inclination?

We must also give God leave, not only to take his own way, but his own time. The appointment of seasons, as well as of events, is his. 'He waits to be gracious.' If he delays, it is because we are not yet brought to that state which fits us for the grant of our request. It is not he who must be brought about, but we ourselves. Or, perhaps, he refuses the thing we ask, in order to give us a better. We implore success in an undertaking, instead of which, he gives us content under the disappointment. We ask for the removal of pain; he gives us patience under it. We desire deliverance from our enemies; he sees that we have not yet turned their enmity to our improvement, and

he will bring us to a better temper by further exercise. We desire him to avert some impending trial; instead of averting it, he takes away its bitterness; he mitigates what we believed would be intolerable, by giving us a right temper under it. How, then, can we say he has failed of his promise, if he gives something more truly valuable than we had requested at his hands?

Some virtues are more called out in one condition of life, and some in another. The exercise of certain qualities has its time and place; but an endeavor after conformity to the image of God, which is best attained by submission to his will, is of perpetual obligation. If he does not require all virtues under all circumstances, there is no state or condition in which he does not require that to which our church perpetually calls us, 'an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.' We may have no time, no capacity, no special call for deeds of notorious usefulness; but, whatever be our pursuits, engagements, or abilities, it will entrench on no time, require no specific call, interfere with no duty, to subdue our perverse will. Though the most severe of all duties, it infringes on no other, but will be the more effectually fulfilled by the very difficulties attending on other pursuits and engagements.

We are so fond of having our own will, that it is astonishing we do not oftener employ it for our own good; for our inward peace is augmented in exact proportion as our repugnance to the Divine will diminishes. Were the conquest over the one complete, the enjoyment of the other would be perfect. But the Holy Spirit does not assume his emphatical title, the COMFORTER, till his previous

offices have operated on the heart, till he has 'reproved us of sin, of righteousness, of judgment.'

God makes use of methods inconceivable to us, to bring us to the submission which we are more ready to request with our lips, than to desire with our hearts. By an imperceptible operation, he is ever at work for our good; he promotes it by objects the most unpromising, by events the most unlikely. He employs means to our shallow views the most improbable to effect his own gracious purposes. In every thing he evinces that his thoughts are not as our thoughts. He overrules the opposition of our enemies, the defection of our friends, the faults of our children—the loss of our fortune as well as the disappointments attending its possession—the unsatisfactoriness of pleasure as well as the privation—the contradiction of our desires—the failure of plans which we thought we had concerted, not only with good judgment but pure intentions. He makes us sensible of our faults by the mischiefs they bring upon us; and acknowledges our blindness by extracting from it consequences diametrically opposite to those which our actions were intended to produce.

Our love to God is stamped with the same imperfection with all our other graces. If we love him at all, it is as it were traditionally, hereditarily, professionally; it is a love of form and not of feeling, of education and not of sentiment, of sense and not of faith. It is at best a submission to authority, and not an effusion of voluntary gratitude, a conviction of the understanding, and not a cordiality of the affections. We rather assume we have this grace than actually possess it, we rather take it for granted on unexamined grounds, than cherish it as a principle from which whatever good

we have must proceed, and from which, if it does not proceed, the principle does not exist.

Surely, say the oppugners of Divine Providence, in considering the calamities inflicted on good men, if God loved virtue, he would not oppress the virtuous. Surely Omnipotence may find a way to make his children good, without making them miserable. But have these casuists ever devised a means by which men may be made good without being made humble, or happy without being made holy, or holy without trials? Unapt scholars indeed we are in learning the lessons taught! But the teacher is not the less perfect because of the imbecility of his children.

If it be the design of Infinite Goodness to disengage us from the world, to detach us from ourselves, and to purify us to himself, the purification by sufferings seems the most obvious method. The same effect could not be any otherwise produced, except by miracles, and God is an economist of his means in grace as well as in nature. He deals out all gifts by measure. His operation in both is progressive. Successive events operate in one case as time and age in the other. As suns and showers so gradually mature the fruits of the earth, that the growth is rather perpetual than perceptible, so God commonly carries on the work of renovation in the heart silently and slowly, by means suitable and simple, though to us imperceptible, and sometimes unintelligible. Were the plans more obvious, and the process ostensible, there would be no room left for the operations of faith, no call for the exercise of patience, no demand for the grace of humility. The road to perfection is tedious and suffering, steep and rugged; our impatience would leap over all the intervening

space which keeps us from it, rather than climb it by slow and painful steps. We would fain be spared the sorrow and shame of our own errors, of all their vexatious obstructions, all their dishonorable impediments. We would be completely good and happy at once, without passing through the stages and gradations which lead to goodness and happiness. We require an instantaneous transformation which costs us nothing; the Spirit of God works by a gradual process which costs us much. We would combine his favor with our self-indulgence; we would be spared the trials he has appointed without losing the felicity he has promised. We complain of the severity of the operation, but the operation would not be so severe, if the disease did not lie so deep.

Besides, the afflictions which God appoints, are not seldom sent to save us from those we should bring on ourselves, and which might have added guilt to misery.—He threatens, but it is that he may finally save. If ‘punishment is his strange,’ it is also his necessary ‘work.’ Even in the sorest affliction, the loss of those we love, there may be a mercy impenetrable to us. God has, perhaps, laid up for us in heaven that friend whom we might have lost in eternity, had he been restored to our prayers here. But if the affliction be not improved, it is, indeed, unspeakably heavy. If the loss of our friend does not help to detach us from the world, we have the calamity without the indemnification; we are deprived of our treasure without any advantage to ourselves. If the loss of him we loved does not make us more earnest to secure our salvation, we may lose at once our friend and our soul.—To endure the penalty and lose the profit, is to be emphatically miserable.



Sufferings are the only relies of the true cross, and when Divine grace turns them to our spiritual good, they almost perform the miracles which blind superstition ascribes to the false one. God mercifully takes from us what we have not courage to offer him ; but if, when he resumes it, he sanctifies the loss, let us not repine. It was his while it was ours. He was the proprietor while we were the possessors.

Though we profess a general readiness to submit to the Divine will, there is nothing in which we are more liable to illusion. Self-love is a subtle casuist. We invent distinctions. We too critically discriminate between afflictions which proceed more immediately from God, and disappointments which come from the world. To the former we acknowledge, in words at least, our willingness to submit. In the latter, though equally his dispensation, we seem to feel justified in refusing to acquiesce. God does not desire us to inflict punishments on ourselves ; he only expects us to bear with patience those he inflicts on us, whether they come more immediately from himself or through the medium of his creatures.

Love being the root of obedience, it is no test of that obedience, if we obey God only in things which do not cross our inclinations, while we disobey him in things that are repugnant to them. Not to obey except when it costs us nothing is rather to please ourselves than God, for it is evident we should disobey him in these also if the allurements were equally powerful in these cases as in the others. We may, indeed, plead an apology that the command we resist is of less importance than that with which we comply ; but this is a false excuse, for the authority which enjoins the

least, is the same with that which commands the greatest; and it is the authority to which we are to submit, as much as to the command.

There is a passage in St. Luke which does not seem to be always brought to bear on this point as fully as it ought: 'unless a man forsake all that he hath, he can not be my disciple.' This does not seem to be quite identical with the command in another place, that a man should 'sell all that he has,' &c. When the Christian world indeed was in its infancy, the literal requisition in both cases was absolutely necessary. But it appears to be a more liberal interpretation of the command, as 'forsaking' all that we have, extends to a full and entire consecration of ourselves to God, a dedication without reserve, not of fortune only, but of every desire, every faculty, every inclination, every talent; a resignation of the whole will, a surrender of the whole soul. It is this surrender which alone sanctifies our best actions. It is this pure oblation, this offering of unshared affection, this unmaimed sacrifice, which is alone acceptable to God, through *that full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction* made for the sins of the whole world. Our money he will not accept without our good will, our devotions without our affections, our services without our hearts. Like the prevaricating pair, whose duplicity was punished by instant death, whatever we keep back will annihilate the value of what we bring. It will be nothing if it be not all.\*

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\* Acts, chap. v.

POVERTY WITH VIRTUE MORE ELIGIBLE THAN  
WEALTH WITHOUT.

THE Almighty has made us all to be happy, and to become so is the business of our lives. In endeavoring to attain this end, however, we discover more diligence than sagacity, and are less deficient in the exertion, than the direction, of our faculties.

We set out in this important pursuit with supposing, that happiness is the produce of situation solely ; that it will only flourish in particular spots, and that there it will spring up spontaneously. We do not seem to know, or sufficiently to consider, that it must be planted and cultivated everywhere, and that, if cultivated, it will flourish anywhere. We are not enough aware that what we call sources of enjoyment, are not so, in themselves, absolutely and necessarily, but only relatively and conditionally ; that they require certain corresponding qualifications in those who draw from them, to enable them to drink at them ; that happiness is the result of an agreement and harmony between the person and the situation, between the inhabitant and the habitation, between the sensibility of the subject and the nature of the objects that act upon him. Light is sweet, but not to the blind ; music is delightful, but not to the deaf ; poetry is entertaining, but not to the tasteless in literature ; polished society is pleasant, but not to the rustic ; retirement is soothing, but only to the placid and untroubled breast ; heaven is a place of felicity, but to the pious and benevolent alone ; and wealth is a blessing, but solely to the wise and good.

To bestow it upon the foolish, the sensual, the

vain, the proud, and the selfish, is to put into the hand of a savage a gem, which he can apply to no valuable purpose, a book he can not read, an instrument of which he knows not the use. We do not appear to consider, that there is such a thing as a capacity and an incapacity of enjoyment; a disposition to be happy, and a disposition to be miserable; that the former will find felicity in almost any situation, that the latter will find it in none.

Where the soil is good, and where seed is sown, the clemency of the skies will call forth fertility; but no showers, however kindly, no suns, however generous, are able to fructify the rock.

For want of these reflections, of the adventurers for happiness that human life exhibits to our view, disappointment is the portion of those who 'prosper in the world and increase in riches,' while the unsuccessful in the pursuit of them become the prey of envy.

The scriptures abound in passages, that tend to set us right upon this subject. One of these, the following, contains a very strong correction of the fatal mistake concerning happiness, into which mankind are so continually falling. 'A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked,' or than many riches, accompanied with wickedness.

This is a pleasing truth to them that have little, and an important truth to them that have much. It shows us happiness in our own power; instructs us in the secret of it; guides us in the search after it; and teaches us to make ourselves independent of situation and accident.

The superiority, above asserted, may be comprehensively illustrated by a successive reference

te, and comparison of, the several component qualities, in the character of a righteous man, which are to be considered as contributing to the enjoyment of property ; and the several follies and vices, which stand opposed to them in the various modifications of the opposite character, and which interfere with that felicity we inconsiderately regard as the inseparable companion of opulence

#### CONTENTMENT.

First, the little that is accompanied with contentment, is better than the riches of those, who, whatever the sum of them they may possess, are dissatisfied with that sum. What is gain ? It is not gold ; it is not power : the Scriptures have answered the question, and they have answered it well. ‘Contentment with godliness is great gain.’

‘But if I had more, I should be contented. It is the possession of much that produces content.’ Into an error more remote from truth than this, the human understanding never strayed. He that is not contented with competence, it is certain, would not be satisfied with superfluity.

Contentment, with that which is enough for nature, is an inseparable attribute of a virtuous temper. It is a ray, in the luminous orb of the virtues, that streams from the same centre, which supplies the rest of the radiant circle. It is a natural and necessary emanation from Faith, Piety, and Charity. There is no truth, of which we require to be so frequently reminded ; no truth is so necessary to our happiness, and none is so apt to escape our memory, as this : That contentment does not grow out of the condition, but out of the character.

So far is what is considered by the world as felicity of situation, from giving birth of itself to felicity of heart, that where the parent principles of happiness are wanting, the tendency of great possessions is rather to diminish than to increase content. There is a closer connexion, a more intimate affinity, in the nature of things, between satisfaction and little, than between satisfaction and much. Those that aspire to wealth, resemble in this respect those that are ambitious of excellence in arts, or in science; the nearer they approach to that perfection after which they pant, the greater is at once their perception, and their impatience, of imperfection.

In this respect, then, the little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of the wicked. He is contented with that little; and contentment is 'wealth, and power, and every earthly thing.'

He that is satisfied with what he eats, fares sumptuously; he that is satisfied with what he wears, is clothed in purple; he that is contented with his dwelling, is the tenant of a palace.

#### ECONOMY AND TEMPERANCE.

Secondly, The little, that is accompanied with economy and temperance, is better than the riches of those who have a taste for profusion.

In such hands, riches are not riches.

Intemperance converts wealth into want. It does this, in three ways.

1. If wealth were inexhaustible, intemperance would impoverish the possessor of it, by sinking the sum of sensual pleasure, in its power to bestow, to a much smaller amount, than that even poverty, with sobriety, is able to command.

In order to secure the largest sum of it, it is necessary that the habits should be so arranged, as to admit of occasional risings above the tenor of our pleasures to more animated and extraordinary entertainments. Novelty and variety are the soul of enjoyment. But that system of life, which is marked by excess, utterly excludes this vital principle of pleasure. He that is already upon the summit, can rise no higher : and he that is always aloft, is no more alive to the sense of elevation, than those who are on the ground. It is the flight thither, and not residence there, which excites the pleasurable perception of height. If he, who is habitually as high as he can ascend, would experience that variation which enlivens life, he must come down. And, indeed, it has repeatedly happened, that when the gay and the dissipated have by any accidental and local necessity, been compelled to descend to the plainness and simplicity of humble accommodation, they have confessed that the change has exhilarated them more than the luxuries of life had for a long time done.

Opulence, then, were it unbounded, in the hand of profusion, is lowest poverty. I say the lowest ; for common poverty, poverty that is merely comparative, can communicate to her sober and temperate sons and daughters, not only food and raiment, but occasional entertainment and delight. But eternal vacation can have no holidays ; and perpetual festivity is a perpetual fast.

2. But, by reducing the superfluities to the necessities of life, and thus multiplying more and more the wants of nature, profusion renders wealth itself inadequate to the system of expense ; and thus produces a feeling of poverty, in the midst of opulence. In consequence of the disproportion

between his property and his factitious necessity, large as in reality his possessions may be, the prodigal feels himself straitened ; he experiences a narrowness in his circumstances, a contraction in his property, ample as it is ; and, in the midst of pecuniary enlargement, his appetites complain of imprisonment. What is this, however vast the sum of worldly substance with which it may be accompanied, what is this but beggary ? Is it of any consequence whether indigence be seated in the purse, or in the fancy ? What difference there is, is in favor of the former situation of it.

I need not say, that this painful feeling of confinement is usually too impatient of it, to be kept within the bounds of prudence ; which leads me to add,

3. That profusion, in the end, is the cause, not only of imaginary, but real indigence. The very first step, in this downward path to ruin, is the beginning of shame and misery. To be obliged to defer the payment of debts ; to be under the necessity of dismissing the industry, that asks its due, with promises and excuses ; to have inferiors, in whose face we are ashamed to look ;—how much must every feeling of honest pride and decent spirit be subdued, before this can be borne !

Is opulence, with these appendages, an object of envy ? How much happier and more enviable is he, however inferior his station may be, who is able to hold up his head, whomsoever he may meet. But if the passage to want be painful, the arrival at it is yet more so. When the scene shuts in ; when the respite from decided, exposed, and notorious poverty, expires ; when the feigned respect, that was forced by dependence, gives way to open contempt ; when the patience of long-suffering



creditors, which hope had kept alive, is converted, by despair, into execration ; and the wretched 'lord of useless thousands' stands deserted, dispirited, and ashamed ; without one friend or flatterer left ; then who was envious of him, surveys him with a sigh, and understands how poor a thing is wealth, without wisdom !

In this respect, then, the little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of folly. It is more productive of pleasure ; more adequate to his wants ; and more durable. Riches, in the hands of prodigality, lose their nature ; they are not themselves ; they are a large sum only of ciphers. The little that a wise man has, however little, is really what it stands for. He extracts from it all the good it contains ; he turns it to the best account.

#### LIBERALITY.

Thirdly, The little that is liberally enjoyed, as far as prudence allows, under the influence of a cheerful trust in Providence, is better than the abundance that is embittered by the anxieties of avarice and the mortifications of a sordid parsimony. In the hands of those who thus use it, as in theirs we have just considered, opulence is penury. There is such a want, to employ the words of one who has wittily exposed the absurdity of it, as 'the want of what we have.' As far as enjoyment is concerned, it is equal, whether gold be in the bowels of the earth, or in the box of parsimony ; whether you have it not in your hand, or whether you have not a heart to use it. In either case, and equally in either, you are a poor man.

Who would not rather be an honest laborer for

hire, whose daily industry is sufficient to supply him with clothes, and food, and fuel, and who, supported by a pious confidence in heaven, can enjoy to-day, without anxiety for the morrow; who, when the shades of evening dismiss him from his task, is able to return to his family, with a cheerful face, and a thankful heart; than the owner of the largest possessions, from whose use they are all locked and guarded by a troop of fears and fancies, which he cannot overcome? Where is the difference, in point of real and actual destitution, between his being debarred from them by foreign force, and his own? between his being forbidden to enjoy them by another, and by himself?

#### CONSCIOUS RECTITUDE AND HONESTY.

I proceed, fourthly, to the most important point of the comparison we are pursuing, and that to which the text more particularly alludes. The little that is accompanied with the consciousness of its having been fairly acquired, is better than the riches that are attended with the remorse of having been ill-gotten.

It is better than the unjust gains, of which the consequent loss to others is divided among many and lies light upon individuals. Can he who has furnished his house, however splendid its trappings, who has adorned his grounds, however delightful their shades, who has clothed his limbs, however superb their attire, with what he has embezzled of public money, or with what he has extorted in the administration of delegated government, or with the wages of political servitude, or with the winnings of dishonorable play, or with the spoils of variously adventurous fraud, or with the gains of

an unlawful or unlawfully conducted traffic, or with the earnings of a liberal, but prostituted profession; can the reaper of such an harvest pass through his apartment with the proud step, entertain his friends with the unclouded gaiety, or sink into his couch with the undisturbed repose of him who, as he sits under a lowly roof, surveys a frugal board, looks round on a circle of plain-clad children, or welcomes to his hearth an humble neighbor, has it to say, and can say it with his hand laid upon his heart, 'Little as is my portion, I have honestly earned it; in the acquisition of this little lot, I have employed no deceitful weight; I have poised no unjust balance; I have practised no artifice; betrayed no trust; overreached no inexperience; injured no innocence; trampled upon no right: I have adhered, not only to the laws of my country, but to the nicer rules of honor, generosity; I have licked the dust of no foot; I have worshipped no pride; I have flattered no vanity; I have not bent my body to one unmanly stoop; I have not forced into my face one adulatory smile?'—Is there not, I ask, a proud swell of soul in such reflections, which opulence, however ample, can not communicate to the mean spirit, that has stooped to pick it out of the dirt, and soiled itself in the act of taking it up.

How much more superior still is the little portion of industrious innocence and integrity, to the largest gains, that are the consequence of an injury, which either from being more concentrated, or accompanied with circumstances of peculiar cruelty, has been more severely felt! With what pity may the honest possessor of a little, look upon them who, by mean and guilty artifices, have diverted from its proper course the domestic descent

of property ! who, by sedulous endeavors to foment family dissensions, to nurse the resentment excited by juvenile and venial indiscretion, or rational refusal to comply with unreasonable requests, or manly opposition to tyrannical commands ; by taking care to keep alive, and blow into a lasting flame, the spark of animosity, which if left to itself would soon have gone out ; by malignantly magnifying the actual faults of those against whom they have plotted, or falsely accusing them of others ; and by the patient exercise of insinuating arts and flattering attentions to them whose hearts they have thus attempted to turn ; have succeeded in supplanting the natural claimant to the inheritance of wealth, in the breast of its proprietor : or who have secured succession to it, by the forgery of a will, to which such circumstances of domestic disagreement have lent a color, and have promised success !—Has opulence any pleasures within its reach that can prevent the reflection from frequently recurring to such possessors of it, that its rightful owner is pining, perhaps, in poverty and obscurity ; and still more than by the pressure of poverty, depressed by the mournful idea of a beloved relative's inexorable alienation and implacable resentment ? Can the ravishers of his plenty enjoy the repast ? Can the usurpers of his pillow sleep ?

With what a yet deeper sigh of compassion, with what a groan of pity, may an honest man, however poor, think upon those who, in haste to inherit the wealth that awaited them, have allowed themselves to indulge an impatience of the natural pace of that mortality, to which they must owe it ; who have been unable to attend the slow step of nature to the tomb ; who were prompted to expe-

dite succession by secret violence; and whose imagination, now that they have obtained their wish, is perpetually haunted by the thought of that grave, in which they have laid the relics, but not buried the remembrance, of those, who should now have been sitting at the table where they feast, and reclining in the bowers they occupy! With what self-gratulation, and gratitude to heaven, may the innocent proprietor of the most scanty sufficiency think of them, who, at the board of festivity, often start at the sudden appearance of that form before imagination's eye, which the earth can not hide from it: who frequently, in the midst of gay companions, make a fruitless attempt to be gay, and essay in vain to shake off, what, in vain they tell themselves, is no more than superstition: who, at the hour of general repose, are kept from their rest by the remembrance of the past, and the prospect of the future: who experience depressions of spirit, no mirth, no music can raise; complain of head-aches, no medical aid can relieve; and often exclaim, in the agony of their soul, "Oh that I could recall what I have done, and restore what I have taken!" whose involuntary expressions of secret anguish have been sufficient to awaken powerful suspicions, though not to furnish legal proofs of their guilt; whose frequent sighs, sudden startings, muttered soliloquies, absent reveries, restless nights, declining health, and fading faces, have excited the surmises of neighbors, the wonder of guests, the pity of domestics; have occasioned their servants to look at them with a speaking silence; caused "curses not loud, but deep, to murmur round the neighborhood;" and converted the respects of the poor and dependent into forced and empty breath! Who that has led an harmless

life, in however humble a walk, upon surveying such a situation as this, will not say with a shudder of pity, with a glow of gratitude to God, and a smile of contentment with his lot, "Better is a little with rightcousness, than great revenues without right!"

Suffer me to add, who is there as yet unstained by deeds like these, that, to gain all this world can give, would consent, whatever be the contraction of his property, to stand in their situation, who, in addition to the deep remorse of having thus injured others to obtain the riches they possess, are so circumstanced as to be in continual dread, and in continual danger, of detection? Some depository of the secret lives; some hired instrument, some mean utensil of villany, whose lips must be kept sealed, from time to time, by oft-repeated bribes. Think what they must feel, in being thus in the power of an inferior! in being drained of their reward by a base fidelity insatiable of pay! whom they are afraid to offend, by an appearance of that contempt they feel! whom they must treat with respect, as well as reward with munificence! who is thus the tyrant of his superiors, and the eternal scourge of them who thought only to have taken up and laid down a tool! and who, in spite of all their preventive liberality, they perpetually fear, will one day betray them! Trembling they reflect, that conscience, in some moment of compunction for having concealed what ought to be published, or having been accessory to an injury that ought to be redressed, may force open the mouth of mercenary concealment, and compel a discovery of the dark transaction: or, if the guilty secret should be kept locked in the breast where it is lodged, until the last hour of life, they know not

how soon that hour may come: and that they know is an honest hour, when the accomplice has nothing to fear from man, and when it is natural for penitence to seek for the forgiveness of God, by the performance of an act of justice. Thus situated, they realize, with a fidelity dreadfully literal, the picture of agitated guilt, which is drawn with such strong strokes, and heightened with such striking colors, in the book of Job! 'Terrors make them afraid on every side; a dreadful sound is in their ears.' If this be not, I know not what is, 'treasure and trouble therewith.'

How happy, in comparison of perturbation like this, surrounded by whatever splendor, is he, however low, in the scale of human life, he lies, who has none but honest secrets! who can say with truth, 'No one is acquainted with any action of mine, of which the discovery to all mankind need call a blush into my face: I have done nothing of which I have reason to be ashamed: the bread which I eat, I have honorably earned: these hands have ministered to my necessities, without contracting any spots!' How much superior is the smallest portion, attended with the peace of this reflection, to the largest possessions, encumbered with such a conscience as we have just considered!

At the close of these considerations, I can not call upon you in vain, for contentment with an inferior condition, which yet contains a sufficient supply for the few and simple necessities of nature; or for reconciliation to the wisdom and justice of those ways of Providence, according to which, wealth is often the portion of the unworthy. Be it so: to such is it any blessing? In the hands of Folly is it not more commonly a curse? Can it

rescue the wicked from any part of their appointed punishment, either in this world or in the next? Can it give happiness to the unreasonable? Can it satisfy the insatiable? Can it supply the wants of either the profuse, or the parsimonious? Can it make the former prudent, or the latter unanxious? Can it heal the distempers of Intemperance? Can it silence the reproaches of conscience? procure the physician that can

‘Minister to a mind diseas’d,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote,  
Cleanse the stuff’d bosom of that perilous stuff,  
Which weighs upon the heart?’

Can it enable a moral nature to forget, or not to feel, the deformity of the guilt it has contracted? Can it wipe from remembrance, or wash the darkness of vice into whiteness? Can it ward off the stroke of mortality, or corrupt the justice of Heaven?—In the hands of the wicked, it is, then, a worthless thing. Let them take it: ‘verily they have their reward.’ He that allows himself to be ‘envious at the wicked, when he sees the prosperity of the foolish,’ suffers himself to be dazzled by the surfaces of things. In contemplating their condition, who roll in ill-acquired riches, he does not properly estimate the bargain they have made. Their gains project to his view; their loss retires from his eye. He beholds their purchase; it is a sparkling purchase; but he sees not the price they have paid. He observes the house, the grounds, the equipage, the troops of friends; but he can not penetrate into the breast; he can not perceive what passes on the pillow.

May our young readers have the wisdom to look



upon a good conscience as 'more precious than rubies,' as a treasure 'unto which all the things that can be desired are not to be compared, and for the loss of which there are no gains that can make them amends. May none of us be ever persuaded to give away innocence for gold: for however at first we may be pleased with the exchange, in a little while we shall feel ourselves to be losers, and admit the conviction, that all the wealth the world contains, when accompanied with the sting of remorse, is not to be put into competition with the smallest portion of it, when attended with the consciousness of integrity.

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## ON SELF-DECEPTION.

So numerous, and so well conducted, are the endeavors of mankind to deceive one another; such is the sum of their vice, and such is the fertility of their invention; so much have they to conceal, and so skilful are they in the art of concealment; that no man was ever able to say, he had never been deceived by human professions or appearances. So great is the multitude of the masks that are worn, and with such nicety are the features frequently delineated, and the colors laid upon them, that many of them, even by the eye of penetration and of experience, have been mistaken for the lines and complexion of nature. How often man employs the breath which is in him, the spirit of God which is in his nostrils, to deceive his brother, that brother into whose breast to make a wonderful conveyance of the ideas that exist in his own, that breath was breathed into him; with what frequency that noble member of

his frame, which was given him to be the sacred and glorious organ of truth, is made the ignominious instrument of falsehood; by what multitudes, that face divine which nature formed for the index of the soul, is instructed to express what is not there; can remain unknown to none, but those that are buried in the shades of entire seclusion from society. Where are they to be found sheltered, in what deep and impenetrable solitude, to whom either their injured property, or their wounded fame, or bleeding affections, or their lost innocence and departed peace, have not, at one time or other, given cause to complain of human insincerity, and to repent of the trust they have reposed in man? The delightful dream of unsuspecting innocence, which paints mankind after her own likeness, is not permitted to continue long. Romantic confidence in the honesty and honor of all it meets, reigns but a short time in the bosom of generous youth. The glow of that sweet delusion is soon succeeded there by the clay-cold conviction, that men should be tried before they are trusted, and by frigid caution in the choice of social connexions. The forwardness of the warm and generous affections of honest and inexperienced nature, to fly forth towards all human kind, is soon repressed, and soon punished. Too soon when, like the young and tender buds of the year, tempted by the sunshine of smiling looks, and the warm breath of friendly professions, they go out from the heart, all fearless and fondly trusting in the treacherous appearances, they receive a cruel check from a conduct, far other than was promised by the genial invitation, that drew them forth: a conduct that blows cold and bleak upon them, and compels them to shrink back again into the

breast; there to shut themselves up from a world they have found so inclement; to venture out no more till warranted by maturer wisdom to trust again; perhaps never again to quit the heart, to which they have been thus painfully forced to retire, but there to wither away, and, from excess of social ardor, to die into cold and comfortless misanthropy.

Where is that walk of human life, which falsehood has not ever, and does not still infest? Who shall number the negotiations in which her breath has been employed? the boards, over which her hands have poised the balance, and spread the merchandise? or the social hearths, at which her polluted lips have profaned the name of friendship?

Where is that place, however sacred, however consecrated to truth, which she has not dared to enter? Is there a temple, in which she has not stood, and stretched forth her hands to the God of truth? Is there a senate, in which she has not risen, and poured the words of patriotism in a copious and fluent stream? Is there a tribunal she has not approached, and there, before the awful Justice of earth and the volume that contains the veracity of Heaven, with lips that but just have left the venerable lids, while angels have shuddered at the daring sounds,—uttered deliberate and solemn deceit? Such is the social deceitfulness of the human heart. Nor does it satisfy itself with deceiving the eyes that are without it, and that can not read it: it practises deceit and practises it with success, upon the eye, which, next to that of Heaven, possesses the most intimate access to it. Its powers of deception are able to impose upon that immediately under which all its operations pass. Man is

not only cheated by the hearts of others, he is also cheated by his own.

This species of human insincerity is the most common of all. It is the most subtle serpent of the race, which has crept into every bosom; to the insinuating entrance of which scarcely the sincerest minds are completely closed; and by which every human being, in a greater or smaller degree, has been sometimes beguiled. He that would not suffer a lie to pass from his lip, is not entirely innocent of lying to his own understanding; and he, whom others have seldomest deceived, has, perhaps, been often duped by himself.

Among the enemies of human virtue, self-insincerity may be placed at the head, and is itself a host. When all the citizens are united in fraternal fidelity to it, the strong city may bid defiance to the besiegers. The open and outward enemy, however numerous, or however brave, it may overcome. But when its walls inclose the enemy, that acts in secret concert with the foe without, its bulwarks are useless. When intestine treachery opens the gates, it is to no purpose that the bars of them are strong.

However impregnable by military skill, or courage, the town that is betrayed is soon taken. No battlements can make any defence against deceit.

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#### ON THE COMPARATIVELY SMALL FAULTS AND VIRTUES.

THE 'Fishers of men,' as if exclusively bent on catching the greater sinners, often make the interstices of the moral net so wide, that it can not retain those of more ordinary size, which every-

where abound. Their draught might be more abundant, were not the meshes so large that the smaller sort, aided by their own lubricity, escape the toils and slip through. Happy to find themselves not bulky enough to be entangled, they plunge back again into their native element, enjoy their escape, and hope they may safely wait to grow bigger before they are in danger of being caught.

It is of more importance than we are aware, or are willing to allow, that we take care diligently to practise the smaller virtues, avoid scrupulously the lesser sins, and bear patiently inferior trials; for the sin of habitually yielding, or the grace of habitually resisting in comparatively small points, tends in no inconsiderable degree to produce that vigor or that debility of mind on which hangs victory or defeat.

Conscience is moral sensation. It is the hasty perception of good and evil, the peremptory decision of the mind to adopt the one or avoid the other. Providence has furnished the body with senses, and the soul with conscience, as a *tact* by which to shrink from the approach of danger; as a prompt feeling to supply the deductions of reasoning; as a spontaneous impulse to precede a train of reflections for which the suddenness and surprise of the attack allow no time. An enlightened conscience if kept tenderly alive by a continual attention to its admonitions, would especially preserve us from those smaller sins, and stimulate us to those lesser duties which we are falsely apt to think are too insignificant to be brought to the bar of religion, too trivial to be weighed by the standard of Scripture.

By cherishing this quick feeling of rectitude, light and sudden as the flash from heaven, and which is in fact the motion of the spirit, we intuitively reject what is wrong before we have time to examine why it is wrong, and seize on what is right before we have time to examine why it is right. Should we not then be careful how we extinguish this sacred spark? Will anything be more likely to extinguish it than to neglect its hourly mementoes to perform the smaller duties, and to avoid the lesser faults, which, as they in a good measure make up the sum of human life, will naturally fix and determine our character, that creature of habits? Will not our neglect or observance of it, incline or indispose us for those more important duties of which these smaller ones are connecting links?

The vices derive their existence from wildness, confusion, disorganization. The discord of the passions is owing to their having different views, conflicting aims, and opposite ends. The rebellious vices have no common head; each is all to itself. They promote their own operations by disturbing those of others, but in disturbing they do not destroy them. Though they are all of one family, they live on no friendly terms. Profligacy hates covetousness as much as if it were a virtue. The life of every sin is a life of conflict, which occasions the torment, but not the death of its opposite. Like the fabled brood of the serpent, the passions spring up, armed against each other, but they fail to complete the resemblance, for they do not effect their mutual destruction.

But without union the Christian graces could not be perfected, and the smaller virtues are the threads and filaments which gently but firmly tie

them together. There is an attractive power in goodness which draws each part to the other. This concord to the virtues is derived from their having one common centre in which all meet. In vice there is a strong repulsion. Though bad men seek each other, they do not love each other. Each seeks the other in order to promote his own purposes, while he hates him by whom his purposes are promoted.

The lesser qualities of the human character are like the lower people in a country; they are numerically, if not individually, important. If well regulated, they become valuable from that very circumstance of numbers, which, under a negligent administration, renders them formidable. The peace of the individual mind and of the nation, is materially affected by the discipline in which these inferior orders are maintained. Laxity and neglect in both cases are subversive of all good government.

But if we may be allowed to glance from earth to heaven, perhaps the beauty of the lesser virtues may be still better illustrated by that long and luminous track made up of minute and almost imperceptible stars, which though separately too inconsiderable to attract attention, yet from their number and confluence, form that soft and shining stream of light everywhere discernible, and which always corresponds to the same fixed stars, as the smaller virtues do to their concomitant great ones.—Without pursuing the metaphor to the classic fiction that the Galaxy was the road through which the ancient heroes went to heaven, may we not venture to say that Christians will make their way thither more pleasant by the consistent practice of the minuter virtues?

Every Christian should consider religion as a fort which he is called to defend. The meanest soldier in the army, if he add patriotism to valor, will fight as earnestly as if the glory of the contest depended on his single arm. But he brings his watchfulness as well as his courage into action. He strenuously defends every pass he is appointed to guard, without inquiring whether it be great or small. There is not any defect in religion or morals so little as to be of no consequence. Worldly things may be little because their aim and end may be little. Things are great or small, not according to their ostensible importance, but according to the magnitude of their object, and the importance of their consequences.

The acquisition of even the smallest virtue being, as has been before observed, an actual conquest over the opposite vice, doubles our moral strength. The spiritual enemy has one object less, and the conqueror one virtue more.

By allowed negligence in small things, we are not aware how much we injure religion in the eye of the world. How can we expect people to believe that we are in earnest in great points, when they see that we can not withstand a trivial temptation, against which resistance would have been comparatively easy? At a distance they hear with respect our general characters. They become domesticated with us, and discover the same failings, littleness, and bad tempers, as they have been accustomed to meet with in the most ordinary persons.

If Milton, in one of his letters to a learned foreigner who had visited him, could congratulate himself on the consciousness that in that visit he had been found equal to his reputation, and had



supported in private conversation his high character as an author ; shall not the Christian be equally anxious to support the credit of his holy profession, by not betraying in familiar life any temper inconsistent with religion ?

It is not difficult to attract respect on great occasions, where we are kept in order by knowing that the public eye is fixed upon us. It is easy to maintain a regard to our dignity in a ‘Symposiack, or an academical dinner ;’ but to labor to maintain it in the recesses of domestic privacy requires more watchfulness, and is no less the duty, than it will be the habitual practice, of the consistent Christian.

Our neglect of inferior duties is particularly injurious to the minds of our dependants and servants. If they see us ‘weak and infirm of purpose,’ peevish, irresolute, capricious, passionate, or inconsistent, in our daily conduct, which comes under their immediate observation, and which comes also within their power of judging, they will not give us credit for those higher qualities which we may possess, and those superior duties which we may be more careful to fulfil. Neither their capacity nor their opportunities, may enable them to judge of the orthodoxy of the head ; but there will be obvious and decisive proofs to the meanest capacity, of the state and temper of the heart. Our greater qualities will do them little good, while our lesser but incessant faults do them much injury. Seeing us so defective in the daily course of domestic conduct, though they will obey us because they are obliged to it, they will neither love nor esteem us enough to be influenced by our advice, nor to be governed by our instructions, on those great points which every conscientious head

of a family will be careful to inculcate on all about him. It demands no less circumspection to be a *Christian*, than to be a '*hero*, to one's valet de chambre.'

In all that relates to God and to himself, the Christian knows of no small faults. He considers all allowed and wilful sins, whatever be their magnitude, as an offence against his Maker. Nothing that offends him can be insignificant. Nothing that contributes to fasten on ourselves a wrong habit, can be trifling. Faults which we are accustomed to consider as small, are repeated without compunction. The habit of committing them is confirmed by the repetition. Frequency renders us first indifferent, then insensible. The hopelessness attending a long indulged custom generates carelessness, till for want of exercise the power of resistance is first weakened, then destroyed.

But there is a still more serious point of view in which the subject may be considered. Do small faults, continually repeated, always retain their originally diminutiveness? Is any axiom more established, than that all evil is of a progressive nature? Is a bad temper which is never repressed, no worse after years of indulgence, than when we at first gave the reins to it? Does that which we first allowed ourselves under the name of harmless levity on serious subjects, never proceed to profaneness? Does what was once admired as proper spirit, never grow into pride, never swell into insolence? Does the habit of incorrect narrative, or loose talking, or allowed hyperbole, never lead to falsehood, never settle in deceit? Before we positively determine that small faults are innocent, we must undertake to prove that they shall never out-

grow their primitive dimensions ; we must ascertain that the infant shall never become a giant

#### PROCRASTINATION.

*Procrastination* is reckoned among the most venial of our faults, and sits so lightly on our minds that we scarcely apologize for it. But who can assure us, that had not the assistance we had resolved to give to one friend under distress, or the advice to another under temptation, to-day, been delayed, and from mere sloth and indolence been put off till to-morrow, it might not have preserved the fortunes of the one, or saved the soul of the other ?

It is not enough that we perform duties ; we must perform them at the right time.—We must do the duty of every day in its own season. Every day has its own imperious duties ; we must not depend upon to-day for fulfilling those which we neglected yesterday, for to-day might not have been granted us. To-morrow will be equally peremptory in its demands ; and the succeeding day, if we live to see it, will be ready with its proper claims.

#### INDECISION.

*Indecision*, though it is not so often caused by reflection as by the want of it, yet may be as mischievous ; for if we spend too much time in balancing probabilities, the period for action is lost. While we are ruminating on difficulties which may never occur, reconciling differences which perhaps do not exist, and poising in opposite scales things

of nearly the same weight, the opportunity is lost of producing that good, which a firm and manly decision would have effected.

#### IDLENESS.

*Idleness*, though itself 'the most unperforming of all the vices,' is however the pass through which they all enter the stage on which they all act. Though supremely passive itself, it lends a willing hand to all evil, practical as well as speculative. It is the abettor of every sin whoever commits it, the receiver of all booty, whoever is the thief. If it does nothing itself, it connives at all the mischief that is done by others.

#### VANITY.

*Vanity* is exceedingly misplaced when ranked, as she commonly is, in the catalogue of small faults. It is under her character of harmlessness that she does all her mischief. She is indeed often found in the society of great virtues. She does not follow in the train, but mixes herself with the company, and by mixing mars it. The use our spiritual enemy makes of her is a master-stroke. When he can not prevent us from doing right actions, he can accomplish his purpose almost as well 'by making us vain of them.' When he can not deprive the public of our benevolence, he can defeat the effect to ourselves by poisoning the principle. When he can not rob others of the good effect of the deed, he can gain his point by robbing the doer of his reward.

## PEEVISHNESS.

*Peevishness* is another of the minor miseries. Human life, though sufficiently unhappy, can not contrive to furnish misfortunes so often as the passionate and the peevish can supply impatience. To commit our reason and temper to the mercy of every acquaintance, and of every servant, is not making the wisest use of them. If we recollect that violence and peevishness are the common resource of those whose knowledge is small, and whose arguments are weak, our very pride might lead us to subdue our passion, if we had not a better principle to resort to. Anger is the common refuge of insignificance. People who feel their character to be slight, hope to give it weight by inflation: but the blown bladder, at its fullest distension, is still empty. Sluggish characters, above all, have no right to be passionate. They should be contented with their own congenial faults. Dullness, however, has its impetuosities and its fluctuations, as well as genius. It is on the coast of heavy Bœotia that the Euripus exhibits its unparalleled restlessness and agitation.

## TRIFLING.

*Trifling* is ranked among the venial faults. But if time be one grand talent given us in order to our securing eternal life; if we trifle away that time so as to lose that eternal life, on which by not trifling we might have laid hold, then will it answer the end of sin. A life devoted to trifles not only takes away the inclination, but the capacity for higher pursuits. The truths of Christianity

have scarcely more influence on a frivolous than on a profligate character. If the mind be so absorbed, not merely with what is vicious, but with what is useless, as to be thoroughly disinclined to the activities of a life of piety, it matters little what the cause is which so disinclines it. If these habits can not be accused of great moral evil, yet it argues a low state of mind; that a being who has an eternity at stake can abandon itself to trivial pursuits. If the great concern of life can not be secured without habitual watchfulness, how is it to be secured by habitual carelessness? It will afford little comfort to the trifler, when at the last reckoning he gives in his long negative catalogue, that the more ostensible offender was worse employed. The trifler will not be weighed in the scale with the profligate, but in the balance of the sanctuary.

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#### ON SELF-DENIAL.

WE are perhaps too much addicted to our innocent delights, or we are too fond of our leisure, of our learned, even of our religious leisure. But while we say it is good for us to be here, the divine vision is withdrawn, and we are compelled to come down from the mount. Or, perhaps, we do not improve our retirement to the purposes for which it was granted, and to which we had resolved to devote it, and our time is broken in upon to make us more sensible of its value. Or we feel a complacency in our leisure, a pride in our books; perhaps we feel proud of the good things we are intending to say, or meditating to write, or preparing to do. A check is necessary, yet it is given in a

way almost imperceptible. The hand that gives it is unseñ, is unsuspected, yet it is the same gracious hand which directs the more important events of life. An importunate application, a disqualifying, though not severe indisposition, a family avocation, a letter important to the writer, but unseasonable to us, breaks in on our projected privacy; calls us to a sacrifice of our inclination, to a renunciation of our own will. These incessant trials of temper, if well improved, may be more salutary to the mind, than the finest passage we had intended to read, or the sublimest sentiment we had fancied we should write.

Instead then of going in search of great mortifications, as a certain class of pious writers recommend, let us cheerfully bear, and diligently improve these inferior trials which God prepares for us. Submission to a cross which he inflicts, to a disappointment which he sends, to a contradiction of our self-love, which he appoints, is a far better exercise than great penances of our own choosing. Perpetual conquests over impatience, ill-temper, and self-will, indicate a better spirit than any self-imposed mortifications. We may traverse oceans, and scale mountains on uncommanded pilgrimages, without pleasing God; we may please him without any other exertion than by crossing our own will.

Perhaps you had been busying your imagination with some projected scheme, not only lawful, but laudable. The design was radically good, but the supposed value of your own agency might too much interfere, might a little taint the purity of your best intentions. The motives were so mixed that it was difficult to separate them. Sudden sickness obstructed the design. You naturally lament the failure, not perceiving that, however

good the work might be for others, the sickness was better for yourself. An act of charity was in your intention, but God saw that your soul required the exercise of a more difficult virtue; that humility and resignation, that the patience, acquiescence, and contrition of a sick bed, were more necessary for you. He accepts the meditated work as far as it was designed for his glory, but he calls his servant to other duties, which were more salutary for him, and of which the master was the better judge. He sets aside his work, and orders him to wait, the more difficult part of his task. As far as your motive was pure, you will receive the reward of your unperformed charity, though not the gratification of the performance. If it was not pure, you are rescued from the danger attending a right action performed on a worldly principle. You may be the better Christian, though one good deed is subtracted from your catalogue.

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#### ON FORTITUDE.

THIS world is a region of danger, in which perfect safety is possessed by no man. Though we live in times of established tranquillity, when there is no ground to apprehend that *an host* shall, in the literal sense, *encamp against us*, yet every man, from one quarter or other, has somewhat to dread. *Riches often make to themselves wings and flee away.* The firmest health may in a moment be shaken. The most flourishing family may unexpectedly be scattered. The appearances of our security are frequently deceitful. When our sky seems most settled and serene, in some unobserved quarter gathers the little black cloud, in which the



tempest ferments, and prepares to discharge itself on our head. Such is the real situation of man in this world; and he who flatters himself with an opposite view of his state, only lives in the paradise of fools.

In this situation, no quality is more requisite than constancy, or fortitude of mind; a quality which the Psalmist appears, from the sentiment in the text, to have possessed in an eminent degree. Fortitude was justly classed by the ancient philosophers among the cardinal virtues. It is indeed essential to the support of them all; and it is most necessary to be acquired by every one who wishes to discharge with fidelity the duties of his station. It is the armor of the mind, which will fit him for encountering the trials and surmounting the dangers that are likely to occur in the course of his life. It may be thought, perhaps, to be a quality in some measure constitutional; dependent on firmness of nerves and strength of spirits. Though partly it is so, yet experience shows that it may also be acquired by principle, and be fortified by reason; and it is only when thus acquired, and thus fortified, that it can be accounted to carry the character of virtue. Fortitude is opposed, as all know, to timidity, irresolution, a feeble and a wavering spirit. It is placed, like other virtues, in the middle between two extremes; standing at an equal distance from rashness on the one hand, and from pusillanimity on the other. In considering this subject, I propose, first, to show the importance of fortitude or constancy; next, to ascertain the grounds on which it must rest; and lastly, to suggest some considerations for assisting the exercise of it.

## IMPORTANCE OF FORTITUDE.

The high importance of fortitude will easily appear, if we consider it as respecting either the happiness of human life, or the proper discharge of its duties.

Without some degree of fortitude there can be no happiness; because, amidst the thousand uncertainties of life, there can be no enjoyment of tranquillity. The man of feeble and timorous spirit lives under perpetual alarms. He foresees every distant danger and trembles. He explores the regions of possibility, to discover the dangers that may arise. Often he creates imaginary ones; always magnifies those that are real. Hence, like a person haunted by spectres, he loses the free enjoyment even of a safe and prosperous state. On the first shock of adversity, he desponds. Instead of exerting himself to lay hold on the resources that remain, he gives up all for lost; and resigns himself to abject and broken spirits.—On the other hand, firmness of mind is the parent of tranquillity. It enables one to enjoy the present without disturbance; and to look calmly on dangers that approach or evils that threaten in future. It suggests good hopes. It supplies resources. It allows a man to retain full possession of himself in every situation of fortune. Look into the heart of this man, and you will find composure, cheerfulness, and magnanimity. Look into the heart of the other, and you will see nothing but confusion, anxiety, and trepidation. The one is a castle built on a rock, which defies the attacks of surrounding waters. The other is a hut placed on the shore,

which every wind shakes, and every wave overflows.

If fortitude be thus essential to the enjoyment of life, it is equally so to the proper discharge of all its most important duties. He who is of a cowardly mind is, and must be, a slave to the world. He fashions his whole conduct according to its hopes and fears. He smiles, and fawns, and betrays, from abject considerations of personal safety. He is incapable of either conceiving or executing any great design. He can neither stand the clamor of the multitude nor the frowns of the mighty. The wind of popular favor, or the threats of power, are sufficient to shake his most determined purpose. The world always knows where to find him. He may pretend to have principles; but on every trying occasion it will be seen that his pretended principles bend to convenience and safety.—The man of virtuous fortitude, again, follows the dictates of his heart, unembarrassed by those restraints which lie upon the timorous. Having once determined what is fit for him to do, no threatenings can shake nor dangers appal him. He rests upon himself, supported by a consciousness of inward dignity. I do not say that this disposition alone will secure him against every vice. He may be lifted up with pride. He may be seduced by pleasure. He may be hurried away by passion. But at least on one quarter he will be safe; by no abject fears misled into evil.

Without this temper of mind no man can be a thorough Christian. For his profession, as such, requires him to be superior to that *fear of man which bringeth a snare*; enjoins him, for the sake of a good conscience, to encounter every danger; and to be prepared, if called, even to lay down his

life in the cause of religion and truth. All who have been distinguished as servants of God, or benefactors of men; all who, in perilous situations, have acted their part with such honor as to render their names illustrious through succeeding ages; have been eminent for fortitude of mind. Of this we have one conspicuous example in the apostle Paul, whom it will be instructive for us to view in a remarkable occurrence of his life. After having long acted as the Apostle of the Gentiles, his mission called him to go to Jerusalem, where he knew that he was to encounter the utmost violence of his enemies. Just before he set sail, he called together the elders of his favorite church at Ephesus, and in a pathetic speech, which does great honor to his character, gave them his last farewell. Deeply affected by their knowledge of the certain dangers to which he was exposing himself, all the assembly were filled with distress, and melted into tears. The circumstances were such as might have conveyed dejection even into a resolute mind; and would have totally overwhelmed the feeble. *They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.* What were then the sentiments, what was the language, of this great and good man? Hear the words which spoke his firm and undaunted mind: *Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there! save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth, in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus,*

*to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* There was uttered the voice, there breathed the spirit, of a brave and a virtuous man. Such a man knows not what it is to shrink from danger when conscience points out his path. In that path he is determined to walk, let the consequences be what they will. *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* Job. "For me there is a part appointed to act. I go to perform it. My duty I shall do to-day. Let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself."

#### THE FOUNDATIONS OF FORTITUDE.

I proceed to show the proper foundations of constancy and fortitude of mind. They are principally two; a good conscience, and trust in God.

A corrupted and guilty man can possess no true firmness of heart. He who by crooked paths pursues dishonorable ends, has many things to dismay him. He not only dreads the disappointment of his designs, by some of those accidents to which all are exposed, but he has also to dread the treachery of his confederates, the discovery and reproach of the world, and the just displeasure of Heaven. His fears he is obliged to conceal; but while he assumes the appearance of intrepidity before the world, he trembles within himself; and the bold and steady eye of integrity frequently darts terror into his heart. There is, it is true, a sort of constitutional courage, which sometimes has rendered men daring in the most flagitious attempts. But this foolhardiness of the rash, this boldness of the ruffian, is altogether different from

real fortitude. It arises merely from warmth of blood, from want of thought, and blindness to danger. As it forms no character of value, so it appears only in occasional sallies ; and never can be uniformly maintained. It requires adventitious props to support it ; and, in some hour of trial, always fails. There can be no true courage, no regular persevering constancy, but what is connected with principle, and founded on a consciousness of rectitude of intention. This, and this only, erects that brazen wall which we can oppose to every hostile attack. It clothes us with an armor on which fortune will spend its shafts in vain. All is sound within. There is no weak place where we particularly dread a blow. There is no occasion for false colors to be hung out. No disguise is needed to cover us. We would be satisfied if all mankind could look into our hearts. What has he to fear who not only acts on a plan which his conscience approves, but who knows that every good man, nay, the whole unbiassed world, if they could trace his intentions, would justify and approve his conduct ?

He knows, at the same time, that he is acting under the immediate eye and protection of the Almighty. *Behold, my witness is in heaven ; and my record is on high.* Job, xvi. 19. Here opens a new source of fortitude to every virtuous man. The consciousness of such an illustrious spectator invigorates and animates him. He trusts that the eternal Lover of righteousness not only beholds and approves, but will strengthen and assist ; will not suffer him to be unjustly oppressed, and will reward his constancy in the end with glory, honor, and immortality. A good conscience, thus supported, bestows on the heart a much greater

degree of intrepidity than it could otherwise inspire. One who rests on an almighty though invisible Protector, exerts his powers with double force; acts with vigor not his own. Accordingly, it was from this principle of trust in God that the Psalmist derived that courage and boldness which he expresses in the text. He had said immediately before, *The Lord is my light and my salvation; the Lord is the strength of my life.* The consequence which directly follows is, *Of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.*

## AIDS TO FORTITUDE.

I will suggest a few considerations which may prove auxiliary to the exercise of virtuous fortitude in the midst of dangers.

From what was just now said, it appears first, that it is of high importance to every one who wishes to act his part with becoming resolution, to cultivate a religious principle, and to be inspired with trust in God. The imperfections of the best are indeed so numerous as to give them no title to claim, on their own account, the protection of Heaven. But we are taught to believe that the merciful God, who made us, and who *knows our frame*, favors the sincere and upright; that the supreme administration of the universe is always on the side of truth and virtue; and that, therefore, every worthy character, and every just and good cause, though for a while it should be depressed, is likely to receive countenance and protection in the end. The more firmly this belief is rooted in the heart, its influence will be more powerful in surmounting the fears which

arise from a sense of our own weakness or danger. The records of all nations afford a thousand remarkable instances of the effect of this principle, both on individuals and on bodies of men. Animated by the strong belief of a just cause and a protecting God, *the feeble have waxed strong*, and have despised dangers, sufferings, and death. Handfuls of men have defied *hosts that were encamped against them*; and have gone forth conquering and to conquer. *The sword of the Lord and of Gideon* has called forth a valor which astonished the world; and which could have been exerted by none but those who fought under a divine banner.

In the next place, let him who would preserve fortitude in difficult situations fill his mind with a sense of what constitutes the true honor of man. It consists not in the multitude of riches, or the elevation of rank; for experience shows that these may be possessed by the worthless, as well as by the deserving. It consists in being deterred by no danger when duty calls us forth; in fulfilling our allotted part, whatever it may be, with faithfulness, bravery, and constancy of mind. These qualities never fail to stamp distinction on the character. They confer on him who discovers them an honorable superiority, which all, even enemies, feel and revere. Let every man, therefore, when the hour of danger comes, bethink himself that now is arrived the hour of trial, the hour which must determine whether he is to rise or to sink for ever in the esteem of all around him. If, when put to the test, he discovers no firmness to maintain his ground, no fortitude to stand a shock, he has forfeited every pretension to a manly mind. He must reckon on being exposed



to general contempt ; and, what is worse, he will feel that he deserves it. In his own eyes he will be contemptible, than which, surely, no misery can be more severe.

But in order to acquire habits of fortitude, what is of the highest consequence is to have formed a just estimate of the goods and evils of life, and of the value of life itself. For here lies the chief source of our weakness and pusillanimity. We overvalue the advantages of fortune, rank, and riches, ease and safety. Deluded by vain opinions, we look to these as our ultimate goods. We hang upon them with fond attachment ; and to forfeit any hope of advancement, to incur the least discredit with the world, or to be brought down but one step from the station we possess, is regarded with consternation and dismay. Hence a thousand weights hang upon the mind, which depress its courage, and bend it to mean and dishonorable compliances. What fortitude can he possess, what worthy or generous purpose can he form, who conceives diminution of rank or loss of fortune to be the chief evils which man can suffer ? Put these into the balance with true honor, with conscious integrity, with the esteem of the virtuous and the wise, with the favor of Almighty God, with peace of mind, and hope of heaven ; and then think whether those dreaded evils are sufficient to intimidate you from doing your duty. Look beyond external appearances to the inside of things. Suffer not yourselves to be imposed on by that glittering varnish with which the surface of the world dazzles the vulgar. Consider how many are contented and happy without those advantages of fortune on which you put so extravagant a value. Consider whether it is possible for you to be happy

with them, if, for their sake, you forfeit all that is estimable in man. The favor of the great, perhaps, you think, is at stake; or that popularity with the multitude on which you build plans of advancement. Alas! how precarious are the means which you employ in order to attain the end you have in view; and the end itself, how little is it worthy of your ambition! That favor which you pursue, of dubious advantage when gained, is frequently lost by servile compliance. The timid and abject are detected and despised, even by those whom they court; while the firm and resolute rise in the end to those honors which the other pursued in vain.

Put the case at the worst. Suppose not your fortune only, but your safety, to be in hazard; your life itself to be endangered by adhering to conscience and virtue. Think what a creeping and ignominious state you would render life, if, when your duty calls, you would expose it to no danger? if by a dastardly behaviour, you would, at any expense, preserve it? That life which you are so anxious to preserve can at any rate be prolonged only for a few years more; and those years may be full of woe. He who will not risk death when conscience requires him to face it, ought to be ashamed to live.—Consider, as a man and a Christian, for what purpose life was given thee by Heaven. Was it that thou mightst pass a few years in low pleasures and ignoble sloth; flying into every corner to hide thyself, when the least danger rises to view? No: life was given that thou mightst come forth to act some useful and honorable part on that theatre where thou hast been placed by Providence; mightst glorify him

that made thee ; and, by steady perseverance in virtue, rise in the end to an immortal state.

Son of man, remember thine original honors ! Assert the dignity of thy nature ! Shake off this pusillanimous dread of death ; and seek to fulfil the ends for which thou wert sent forth by thy Creator !—The sentiment of a noble mind is, *I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy.* To the finishing of his course let every one direct his eye ; and let him now appreciate life according to the value it will be found to have when summed up at the close. This is the period which brings everything to the test. Illusions may formerly have imposed on the world ; may have imposed on the man himself. But all illusion then vanishes. The real character comes forth. The estimate of happiness is fairly formed. Hence it has been justly said that no man can be pronounced either great or happy until his last hour come. To that last hour, what will bring such satisfaction or add so much dignity as the reflection on having surmounted with firmness all the discouragements of the world, and having persevered to the end in one uniform course of fidelity and honor ? We remarked before the magnanimous behavior of the Apostle Paul, when he had persecution and distress full in view. Hear now the sentiments of the same great man, when the time of his last suffering approached ; and remark the majesty and ease with which he looked on death. *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* 2 Timothy, iv. 6, 7. How many years of life does such

a dying moment overbalance? Who would not choose in this manner to go off the stage, with such a song of triumph in his mouth, rather than prolong his existence through a wretched old age, stained with sin and shame?

Animated by these considerations, let us nourish that fortitude of mind which is so essential to a man and a Christian. Let no discouragement nor danger deter us from doing what is right. *Through honor and dishonor, through good report and bad report*, let us preserve fidelity to our God and our Saviour. *Though a host should encamp against us*, let us not fear to discharge our duty. God assists us in the virtuous conflict; and will crown the conqueror with eternal rewards. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. To him that overcometh, saith our blessed Lord, I will grant to sit with me on my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.* Rev. ii. 10; iii. 21.

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### ADVANTAGE OF A HIGH STANDARD OF RELIGION.

EVERYTHING which relates to God is infinite. We must therefore, while we keep our hearts humble, keep our aims high. Our highest services indeed are but finite, imperfect. But as God is unlimited in goodness, he should have our unlimited love. The best we can offer is poor, but let us not withhold that best. He deserves incomparably more than we have to give. Let us not give him less than all. If he has ennobled our corrupt nature with spiritual affections, let us not refuse

their noblest aspirations, to their noblest object. Let him not behold us so prodigally lavishing our affections on the meanest of his bounties, as to have nothing left for himself. As the standard of everything in religion is high, let us endeavor to act in it with the highest intention of mind, with the largest use of our faculties. Let us obey him with the most intense love, adore him with the most fervent gratitude. Let us 'praise him according to his excellent greatness.' Let us serve him with all the strength of our capacity, with all the devotion of our will.

Grace being a new principle added to our natural powers, as it determines the desires to a higher object, so it adds vigor to their activity. We shall best prove its dominion over us by desiring to exert ourselves in the cause of heaven with the same energy with which we once exerted ourselves in the cause of the world. The world was too little to fill our whole capacity. Scaliger lamented how much was lost because so fine a poet as Claudian, in his choice of a subject, wanted matter worthy of his talent; but it is the felicity of the Christian to have chosen a theme to which all the powers of his heart and of his understanding will be found inadequate. It is the glory of religion to supply an object worthy of the entire consecration of every power, faculty, and affection of an immaterial, immortal being.

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#### TEST OF TRUE RELIGION.

THE proper motion of the renewed heart is still directed upward. True religion is of an aspiring nature, continually tending towards that heaven

from whence it was transplanted. Its top is high because its root is deep. It is watered by a perennial fountain; in its most flourishing state it is always capable of further growth. Real goodness proves itself to be such by a continual desire to be better. No virtue on earth is ever in a complete state. Whatever stage of religion any man has attained, if he be satisfied to rest in that stage, we would not call that man religious. The Gospel seems to consider the highest degree of goodness as the lowest with which a Christian ought to sit down satisfied. We can not be said to be finished in any Christian grace, because there is not one which may not be carried further than we have carried it. This promotes the double purpose of keeping us humble as to our present stage, and of stimulating us to something higher which we may hope to attain.

That superficial thing, which by mere people of the world is dignified by the appellation of religion, though it brings just that degree of credit which makes part of the system of worldly Christians; neither brings comfort for this world, nor security for the next. Outward observances, indispensable as they are, are not religion. They are the accessory, but not the principal; they are important aids and adjuncts, but not the thing itself; they are its aliment but not its life, the fuel but not the flame, the scaffolding but not the edifice. Religion can no more subsist merely by them, that it can subsist without them. They are divinely appointed, and must be conscientiously observed; but observed as a means to promote an end, and not as an end in themselves.

## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

## THE OLD TESTAMENT.

It is from the Holy Scriptures alone that the nature of our divine religion can be adequately ascertained; and as it is only in that sacred volume that we can discover those striking congruities between Christianity, and all the moral exigencies of man, which form so irresistible an evidence of its coming from that God, 'who is above all, and through all, and in us all.'

There are, however, some additional points of view in which the Holy Scripture ought to be considered. It is doubtless most deeply interesting, as it contains in it that revelation from heaven which was 'to give light to them that sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.' But while we joyfully follow this collected radiance, we may humbly endeavor to examine the apparatus itself by which those beams of heaven are thrown on our path. Let us then consider the divine volume somewhat more in detail, endeavoring at the same time not to overlook those features which it presents to the critic, or philologist. We do not mean to make him who, while he reads, affects to forget that he has in his hands the *book of God*, and therefore indulges his perverse or profligate fancy, as if he were perusing the poems of Homer or of Hafez. But we mean the Christian critic, and the Christian philologist; characters, it is true, not very common, yet through the mercy of God so exemplified in a few nobler instances, even in our own days, as to convince us, that in the formation of

these volumes of eternal life, no faculty, no taste, no impressible point in the mind of man, has been left unprovided for. They show us, too, what an extensive field the sacred Scriptures furnish for those classical labors, of which they possibly were deemed scarcely susceptible before the admirable Lowth gave his invaluable Prelections.

The first circumstance which presents itself, is the variety of composition which is crowded into these narrow limits. Historical records extending through thousands of years;—poetry of almost every species;—biographic memoirs of that very kind which the modern world agrees to deem most interesting; epistolary correspondence which, even for excellence of manner, might challenge a comparison with any composition of that nature in the world; and lastly, that singular kind of writing, peculiar to this sacred book, in which the veil that hides futurity from man is penetrated, remote occurrences so anticipated, as to imply a demonstration that God alone could have communicated such knowledge to man.

In the historic parts, we cannot but be struck with a certain peculiar consciousness of accurate knowledge, evincing itself by its two grand characteristics, precision and simplicity. They are not the annals of a nation which are before us, so much as the records of a family. Truth is obviously held in supreme value, since, even where it is discreditable, there is not the slightest attempt to disguise it. The affections are cordially at work: but they are more filial than patriotic, and more devout than filial. To these writers the God of their fathers is of more importance than their fathers themselves. They therefore preserve, with the greatest care, those transactions of their an-



cestors, which were connected with the most signal interferences of heaven ; and no circumstance is omitted, by which additional motives might be afforded for that habitual reverence, supreme love, and unshaken confidence, towards the Eternal Father, which constituted the pure and sublime religion of this singly enlightened people. What Moses magnificently expresses in the exordium of that noble ode, the 90th psalm, contains the central principle which all their history was intended to impress. 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place from one generation to another: before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst made the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting, THOU ART GOD.'

Other nations have doubtless made their history subservient to their mythology ; or rather, being ignorant of the facts, they have at once gratified their national vanity, and indulged their moral depravity, in imagining, offensive and monstrous chimeras. But do these humiliating infatuations of human kind, universal as they have been, bear any shadow of analogy to the divinely philosophic grandeur of Hebrew piety ? All other mythologic histories degrade our nature. This alone restores its primeval dignity. The pious Jews were doubtless the greatest zealots on earth. But for whom ? 'For no grisly terror,' 'nor execrable shape,' like all other Orientalists, ancient and modern ; no brute like the Egyptians, nor deified monster worse than brute, like the Greeks and Romans. But it was for HIM, whom philosophers in all ages have in vain labored to discover ; of whose character, nevertheless, they have occasionally caught some faint idea from those very Jews, whom they have despised, and who, in the description even of

the heathen Tacitus, awes our minds, and claims the natural homage of our hearts.—‘The Egyptians,’ says that unbribed evidence, in the midst even of an odious representation of the Jewish nation, ‘venerate various animals, as well as likenesses of monsters. The Jews acknowledge, and that with the *mind* only, a single Deity. They account those to be profane, who form images of God of perishable materials, in the likeness of men. There is *the one supreme eternal God unchangeable, immortal*. They therefore suffer no statues in their cities, and still less in their temples. They have never shown this mark of flattery to their kings. They have never done this honor to the Cæsars.’\*

What then was zeal for such worship as this, but the purest reason, and the highest magnanimity? And how wise as well as heroic do they appear who made no account of life in such a cause! ‘O king,’ say they, ‘we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us out of thine hand! But if not, be it known unto thee, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.’

Of such a religion as this, what can be more interesting than the simple, the affectionate history? It is not men whom it celebrates; it is ‘Him who only hath immortality, who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.’ And how does it represent him? That single expression of the patriarch Abraham will fully inform us: ‘Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee! Shall not the judge of all

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\* Tacitus, Hist. Lib. v. 5.

the earth do right.' A sentiment, short and simple as it is, which carries more light to the mind, and more consolation to the heart, than all the volumes of all the philosophers.

But what was the *moral* efficacy of this religion? Let the youthful Joseph tell us. Let him, at the moment of his victory over all that has most effectually subdued human nature, discover to us where his strength lay. 'How,' says he, 'shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'

Of the lesser excellencies of these historic records, little on the present occasion can, and, happily, little needs be said. If the matter is unmixed truth, the manner is unmixed nature. Were the researches of Sir William Jones, and those who have followed him in the same track, valuable on no other account, they would be inestimable in this respect, that through what they have discovered and translated, we are enabled to compare other eastern compositions with the sacred books of the Hebrews; the result of which comparison, supposing only taste and judgment to decide, must ever be this, that, in many instances, nothing can recede farther from the simplicity of truth and nature than the one, nor more constantly exhibit both than the other. This assertion may be applied with peculiar justness to the poetic parts of the Old Testament. The character of the eastern poetry, in general, would seem to be that of floridness and exuberance, with little of the true sublime, and a constant endeavor to outdo rather than to imitate nature. The Jewish poetry seems to have been cast in the most perfect mould. The expressions are strictly subordinate to the sense; and while nothing is more energetic, nothing is more simple and natural. If the language be

strong, it is the strength of sentiment allied with the strength of genius, which alone produces it. For this striking dissimilarity the difference of subject will account. There is one God—*This* is perfect simplicity. He is omniscient, omnipotent, infinite, and eternal—*This* is sublimity beyond which nothing can rise. What evinces this to be the real source of excellence in Hebrew poetry is, that no instance of the sublime, in the whole compass of human composition, will bear a comparison with what the Hebrew poets say of the Almighty. For example: what in all the poetry, even of Homer, is to be compared with this passage of David. ‘Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? if I climb up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.’

It is a peculiarity of Hebrew poetry, that it alone, of all the poetry we know of in the world, retains its poetic structure in the most literal translation; nay, indeed, the more literal the translation, the less the poetry is injured. The reason is, that the sacred poetry of the Hebrews does not appear to depend on cadence or rhythm, or anything merely verbal, which literal translation into another language necessarily destroys; but on a method of giving to each distinct idea a two-fold expression, so that when the poetry of the Old Testament is perfect, and not injured by erroneous translation, it exhibits a series of couplets, in which the second member of each couplet repeats the same, or very nearly the same

sense, in a varied manner—As in the beginning of the 95th psalm :

O come let us sing unto the Lord,  
Let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation ;  
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,  
And show ourselves glad in him with psalms :  
For the Lord is a great God,  
And a great king above all gods :  
In his hands are the deep places of the earth,  
And the strength of the hills is his also.

The motive for adopting such a structure we easily conceive to have been, that the composition might be adapted to responsive singing. But, can we avoid acknowledging a much deeper purpose of infinite wisdom, than that poetry which was to be translated into all languages, should be of such a kind as literal translation could not decompose ?

On the subject of Hebrew poetry, however, it is only necessary to refer the reader to bishop Lowth's work already mentioned, and to that shorter, but most luminous discourse on this subject, prefixed to the same excellent author's translation of Isaiah.

Moral philosophy in its truest and noblest sense, is to be found in every part of the Scriptures. Revealed religion being, in fact, that 'day-spring from on high,' of whose happy effects the Pagan philosophers had no knowledge, and the want of which they were always endeavoring to supply by artificial but most delusive contrivances. But the portion of the sacred volume which is most distinctly appropriated to this subject are the books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. In the former of these, amid some difficult passages, obscured to us by our ignorance of ancient nations and manners,

there are some of the deepest reflections on the vanity of all things earthly, and on the indispensable necessity of sincere religion, in order to cure ease and happiness, that ever came from the pen of man. It asserts the immortality of the soul, of which some have supposed the Jews ignorant, in terms the most unequivocal. 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and *the spirit shall return to God who gave it.*' And it ends with a corollary to which every human heart ought to respond, because all just reflections lead to it.—'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is *the whole duty of man.*—For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.'

The Proverbs are an invaluable summary of every species of practical wisdom. The first nine chapters being a discourse on true wisdom, that is, sincere religion, as a principle, and the remainder a sort of magazine of all its varied parts, civil, social, domestic, and personal, in this world; together with clear and beautiful intimations of happiness in a life to come. As for example:—'The path of the just is as a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Here, one of the most delightful objects in nature, the advancing dawn of the morning, is educed as an emblem of that growing comfort and cheerfulness which inseparably attend a life of piety. What then, by inevitable analogy, is that perfect day in which it is made to terminate, but the eternal happiness of heaven? Both these books, with the psalms, are distinguished not only for the wisdom and spirituality which pervade every page, but for the variety and beauty of their style, and

for their adaptation to the various conditions and states of feeling to which the minds and hearts of men are liable.

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## ON THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

I now proceed to give some short sketches of the matter contained in the different books of the Bible, and of the course in which they ought to be read.

The first book, GENESIS, contains the most grand, and, to us, the most interesting events that ever happened in the universe:—The creation of the world, and of man:—The deplorable fall of man, from his first state of excellence and bliss, to the distressed condition in which we see all his descendants continue:—The sentence of death pronounced on Adam, and on all his race; with the reviving promise of that deliverance which has since been wrought for us by our blessed Saviour:—The account of the early stage of the world:—Of the universal deluge:—The division of mankind into different nations and languages:—The story of Abraham the founder of the Jewish people; whose unshaken faith and obedience, under the severest trial that human nature could sustain, obtained such favor in the sight of God, that he vouchsafed to style him his *friend*, and promised to make of his posterity a great nation; and that, in his seed, that is, in one of his descendants, all the kingdoms of the earth should be blessed.—This, you will easily see, refers to the Messiah, who was to be the blessing and deliverance of all nations. It is amazing that the Jews, possessing

this prophecy among many others, should have been so blinded by prejudice, as to have expected from this great personage, only a temporal deliverance of their own nation from the subjection to which they were reduced under the Romans ; it is equally amazing that some Christians should, even now, confine the blessed effects of his appearance upon earth, to this or that particular sect or profession, when he is so clearly and emphatically described as the Saviour of the *whole world* !

The story of Abraham's proceeding to sacrifice his only son at the command of God, is affecting in the highest degree, and sets forth a pattern of unlimited resignation, that every one ought to imitate, in those trials of obedience under temptation, or of acquiescence under afflicting dispensations, which fall to their lot. Of this we may be assured, that our trials will be always proportioned to the powers afforded us : if we have not Abraham's strength of mind, neither shall we be called upon to lift the bloody knife against the bosom of an only child : but, if the Almighty arm should be lifted up against him, we must be ready to resign him, and all we hold dear, to the divine will. This action of Abraham has been censured by some, who do not attend to the distinction between obedience to a special command, and the detestably cruel sacrifices of the heathens, who sometimes voluntarily, and without any divine injunctions, offered up their own children, under the notion of appeasing the anger of their gods. An absolute command from God himself, as in the case of Abraham, entirely alters the moral nature of the action ; since He, and He only, has a perfect right over the lives of his creatures, and may appoint whom he will, either angel or man, to be his instrument of de-



struction. That it was really the voice of God which pronounced the command, and not a delusion, might be made certain to Abraham's mind, by means we do not comprehend, but which we know to be within the power of Him who made our souls as well as our bodies, and who can control and direct every faculty of the human mind: and we may be assured, that if He was pleased to reveal himself so miraculously, he would not leave a possibility of doubting whether it was a real or an imaginary revelation: thus the sacrifice of Abraham appears to be clear of all superstition, and remains the noblest instance of religious faith and submission that was ever given by a mere man: we can not wonder that the blessings bestowed on him for it should have been extended to his posterity.

This book proceeds with the history of Isaac, which becomes very interesting to us, from the touching scene I have mentioned;—and, still more so, if we consider him as the type of our Saviour. It recounts his marriage with Rebecca:—the birth and history of his two sons; Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes; and Esau, the father of the Edomites, or Idumeans:—the exquisitely affecting story of Joseph and his brethren,—and of his transplanting the Israelites into Egypt, who there multiplied to a great nation.

In EXODUS you read of a series of wonders, wrought by the Almighty, to rescue the oppressed Israelites from the cruel tyranny of the Egyptians, who, having first received them as guests, by degrees reduced them to a state of slavery. By the most peculiar mercies and exertions in their favor, God prepared his chosen people to receive, with reverent and obedient hearts, the solemn restitu-

tion of those primitive laws, which probably he had revealed to Adam and his immediate descendants, or which, at least, he had made known by the dictates of conscience; but which, time and the degeneracy of mankind had much obscured.— This important revelation was made to them in the wilderness of Sinai: there, assembled before the burning mountain, surrounded ‘with blackness, and darkness, and tempest,’ they heard the awful voice of God pronounce the eternal law, impressing it on their hearts with circumstances of terror, but without those encouragements, and those excellent promises, which were afterwards offered to mankind by Jesus Christ.

Thus were the great laws of morality restored to the Jews, and, through them, transmitted to other nations; and by that means a great restraint was opposed to a torrent of vice and impiety, which began to prevail over the world.

To those moral precepts, which are of perpetual and universal obligation, were superadded, by the ministration of Moses, many peculiar institutions, wisely adapted to different ends; either to fix the memory of those past deliverances, which were figurative of a future and far greater salvation,— to place inviolable barriers between the Jews and the idolatrous nations, by whom they were surrounded,—or, to be the civil law, by which the community was to be governed.

To conduct this series of events, and to establish these laws with his people, God raised up that great prophet, Moses, whose faith and piety enabled him to undertake and execute the most arduous enterprises, and to pursue, with unabated zeal, the welfare of his countrymen. Even in the hour of death, this generous ardor still prevailed: his

last moments were employed in fervent prayers for their prosperity, and in rapturous gratitude for the glimpse vouchsafed him of a *Saviour*, far greater than himself, whom God would one day raise up to his people.

Thus did Moses, by the excellency of his faith, obtain a glorious pre-eminence among the saints and prophets in heaven; while, on earth, he will be ever revered, as the first of those benefactors to mankind, whose labors for the public good have endeared their memory to all ages.

The next book is *LEVITICUS*; which contains little besides the laws for the peculiar ritual observance of the Jews, and consequently affords no great instruction to us now: and, the same may be said of the first eight chapters of *NUMBERS*. The rest of *Numbers* is chiefly a continuation of the history, with some ritual laws.

In *DEUTERONOMY*, Moses makes a recapitulation of the foregoing history, with zealous exhortations to the people, faithfully to worship and obey that God, who had worked such amazing wonders for them; he promises them the noblest temporal blessings, if they should prove obedient; and adds the most awful and striking denunciations against them, should they rebel against, or forsake the true God.

I have before observed, that the sanctions of the Mosaic law were *temporal* rewards and punishments; those of the New Testament are *eternal*; these last, as they are so infinitely more forcible than the first, were reserved for the last, best gift to mankind; and were revealed by the Messiah, in the fullest and clearest manner. Moses, in this book, directs the method in which the Israelites were to deal with the seven nations, whom they

were appointed to punish for their profligacy and idolatry; and whose land they were to possess, when they had driven out the old inhabitants. He gives them excellent laws, civil as well as religious, which were ever after the standing municipal laws of that people. This book concludes with Moses's song and death.

The book of JOSHUA contains the conquests of the Israelites over the seven nations, and their establishment in the Promised Land.—Their treatment of these conquered nations may appear to you very cruel and unjust, if you consider it as their own act, unauthorized by a positive command; but they had the most absolute injunctions, not to spare these corrupt people;—‘to make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them, but utterly to destroy them.’ And the reason is given:—‘Lest they should turn away the Israelites from following the Lord, that they might serve other gods.’\* The children of Israel are to be considered as instruments in the hand of the Lord, to punish those whose idolatry and wickedness had deservedly brought destruction on them: this example, therefore, can not be pleaded in behalf of cruelty, or bring any imputation on the character of the Jews.

With regard to other cities which did not belong to these seven nations, they were directed to deal with them according to the common law of arms at that time. If the city submitted, it became tributary, and the people were spared; if it resisted, the men were to be slain, but the women and children saved.† Yet, though the crime of cruelty can not be justly laid to their charge on this occasion,

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\* Deut. chap. ii.

† Ibid. chap. xx.

you will observe, in the course of their history, many things recorded of them very different from what you would expect from the chosen people of God, if you supposed them selected on account of their own merit: their national character was by no means amiable; and we are repeatedly told that they were not chosen for their superior righteousness: 'for, they were a stiff-necked people, and provoked the Lord with their rebellions, from the day they left Egypt.' 'You have been rebellious against the Lord,' says Moses, 'from the day that I knew you.'\* And he vehemently exhorts them, not to flatter themselves that their success was, in any degree, owing to their own merits. They were appointed to be the scourge of other nations, whose crimes rendered them fit objects of divine chastisement. For the sake of righteous Abraham, their founder, and perhaps for many other wise reasons, undiscovered to us, they were selected from a world over-run with idolatry, to preserve upon earth the pure worship of the one only God, and to be honored with the birth of the Messiah amongst them. For this end, they were precluded by divine command from mixing with any other people, and defended by a great number of peculiar rites, and observances, from falling into the corrupt worship practised by their neighbors.

The book of JUDGES, in which you will find the affecting stories of Sampson and of Jephtha, carries on the history from the death of Joshua, about two hundred and fifty years: but the facts are not told in the times in which they happened, which makes some confusion; and it will be necessary to consult the marginal dates and notes, as well as

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\* Deut. chap. ix 24.

the Index, in order to get any clear idea of the succession of events during that period.

The history then proceeds regularly through the two books of SAMUEL, and those of KINGS. Nothing can be more interesting and entertaining than the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon ; but, after the death of Solomon, when ten tribes revolted from his son Rehoboam, and became a separate kingdom, you will find some difficulty in understanding distinctly the histories of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which are blended together, and, by the likeness of the names, and other particulars, will be apt to confound your mind, without great attention to the different threads thus carried on together : the Index here will be of great use to you. The second book of Kings concludes with the Babylonish captivity, 588 years before Christ ; till which time, the kingdom of Judea had descended uninterruptedly in the line of David.

The first book of CHRONICLES begins with a genealogy from Adam, through all the tribes of Israel and Judah : and the remainder is the same history which is contained in the books of Kings, with little or no variation, till the separation of the ten tribes ; from that period it proceeds with the history of the kingdom of Judah alone, and gives therefore a more regular and clear account of the affairs of Judah than the book of Kings. You may pass over the first book of Chronicles, and the nine first chapters of the second book, with a cursory reading ; but, by all means, read carefully the remaining chapters, as they will give you more clear and distinct ideas of the history of Judah than that you read in the second book of

**Kings.** The second of Chronicles ends, like the second of Kings, with the Babylonish captivity.

You must pursue the history in the book of **EZRA**, which gives an account of the return of some of the Jews, on the edict of Cyrus, and of the rebuilding the Lord's temple.

**NEHEMIAH** carries on the history for about twelve years, when he himself was governor of Jerusalem, with authority to rebuild the walls, &c.

The story of **ESTHER** is prior in time to that of Ezra and Nehemiah; as you will see by the marginal dates; however, as it happened during the seventy years' captivity, and is a kind of episode, it may be read in its own place.

This is the last of canonical books that is properly historical: and I would therefore advise, that you pass over what follows, till you have continued the history through the apocryphal books.

The history of **JOB** is probably very ancient, though that is a point upon which learned men have differed: it is dated, however, 1520 years before Christ: I believe it is uncertain by whom it was written; many parts of it are obscure, but it is well worth studying, for the extreme beauty of the poetry, and for the noble and sublime devotion it contains. The subject of the dispute, between Job and his pretended friends, seems to be, whether the Providence of God distributes the rewards and punishments of this life, in exact proportion to the merit or demerit of each individual. His antagonists suppose that it does; and therefore infer from Job's uncommon calamities, that, notwithstanding his apparent righteousness, he was in reality a grievous sinner: they aggravate his supposed guilt, by the imputation of hypocrisy, and call upon him to confess it, and to acknowledge

the justice of his punishment. Job asserts his own innocence and virtue in the most pathetic manner, yet does not presume to accuse the Supreme Being of injustice. Elihu attempts to arbitrate the matter, by alleging the impossibility that so frail and ignorant a creature as man should comprehend the ways of the Almighty, and, therefore, condemns the unjust and cruel inference the three friends had drawn from the sufferings of Job. He also blames Job for the presumption of acquitting himself of all iniquity, since the best of men are not pure in the sight of God,—but all have something to repent of; and he advises him to make this use of his afflictions. At last, by a bold figure of poetry, the Supreme Being is himself introduced, speaking from the whirlwind, and silencing them all by the most sublime display of his own power, magnificence, and wisdom, and of the comparative littleness and ignorance of man. This indeed is the only conclusion of the argument which could be drawn, at a time when life and immortality were not yet brought to light. A future retribution is the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty arising from the sufferings of good people in this life.

Next follow the PSALMS; with which you can not be too conversant. If you have any taste, either for poetry or devotion, they will be your delight, and will afford you a continual feast. The Bible translation is far better than that used in the Common Prayer Book; and will often give you the sense, when the other is obscure. In this, as well as in all other parts of the Scripture, you must be careful always to consult the margin, which gives you the corrections made since the last translation, and is generally preferable to the words of



the text. I would wish you to select some of the Psalms that please you best, and get them by heart; or, at least, make yourself mistress of the sentiments contained in them: Dr. Delany's Life of David will show you the occasions on which several of them were composed, which add much to their beauty and propriety: and by comparing them with the events of David's life, you will greatly enhance your pleasure in them. Never did the spirit of true piety breathe more strongly than in these divine songs; which, being added to a rich vein of poetry, makes them more captivating to my heart and imagination than anything I ever read. You will consider how great disadvantages any poems must sustain from being rendered literally into prose, and then imagine how beautiful these must be in the original. May you be enabled, by reading them frequently, to transfuse into your own breast that holy flame which inspired the writer!—to delight in the Lord, and in his laws, like the Psalmist,—to rejoice in him always, and to think 'one day in his courts better than a thousand!' But, may you escape the heart-piercing sorrow of such repentance as that of David,—by avoiding sin, which humbled this unhappy king to the dust,—and which cost him such bitter anguish, as it is impossible to read of without being moved! Not all the pleasures of the most prosperous sinner could counterbalance the hundredth part of those sensations described in his Penitential Psalms;—and which must be the portion of every man who has fallen from a religious state into such crimes, when once he recovers a sense of religion and virtue, and is brought to a real hatred of sin: however available such repentance may be to the safety and happiness of the soul

after death, it is a state of such exquisite suffering here, that one can not be enough surprised at the folly of those who indulge in sin, with the hope of living to make their peace with God by repentance. Happy are they who preserve their innocence unsullied by any great or wilful crimes, or who have only the common failings of humanity to repent of; these are sufficiently mortifying to a heart deeply smitten with the love of virtue, and with the desire of perfection.—There are many very striking prophecies of the Messiah, in these divine songs; particularly in Psalm xxii. Such may be found scattered up and down almost throughout the Old Testament. To bear testimony to *him* is the great and ultimate end for which the spirit of prophecy was bestowed on the sacred writers;—but this will appear more plainly to you, when you enter on the study of prophecy, which you are now much too young to undertake.

The PROVERBS and ECCLESIASTES are rich stores of wisdom; from which I wish you to adopt such maxims as may be of infinite use, both to your temporal and eternal interest. But detached sentences are a kind of reading not proper to be continued long at a time; a few of them, well chosen and digested, will do you much more service than to read a half dozen chapters together; in this respect they are directly opposite to the historical books, which, if not read in continuation, can hardly be understood, or retained to any purpose.

The SONG of SOLOMON is a fine poem; but its mystical reference to religion lies deep.

Next follow the PROPHECIES, which, though highly deserving the greatest attention and study, I think you had better omit for some years, and then read them with a good exposition; as they

are much too difficult for you to understand without assistance. Dr. Newton on the Prophecies will help you much, whenever you undertake this study ;—which you should by all means do, when your understanding is ripe enough ; because one of the main proofs of our religion rests on the testimony of the Prophecies, and they are very frequently quoted, and referred to, in the New Testament : besides, the sublimity of the language and sentiments, through all the disadvantages of antiquity and translation, must, in very many passages, strike every person of taste ; and the excellent moral and religious precepts found in them, must be useful to all.

Though I have spoken of these books in the order in which they stand, I repeat that they are not to be read in that order ;—but that the thread of the history is to be pursued, from Nchemiah, to the first book of MACCABEES, in the Apoerypha : taking care to observe the Chronology regularly, by referring to the Index, which supplies the deficiencies of this history, from ‘ Josephus’s Antiquities of the Jews.’ The first of Maccabees carries on the story till within 195 years of our Lord’s circumcision ; the second book is the same narrative, written by a different hand, and does not bring the history so forward as the first ; so that it may be entirely omitted, unless you have the curiosity to read some particulars of the heroic constancy of the Jews, under the tortures inflicted by their heathen conquerors ; with a few other things not mentioned in the first book.

You must then connect the history by the help of the Index, which will give you brief heads of the changes that happened in the state of the Jews, from this time till the birth of the Messiah.

The other books of the Apocrypha, though not admitted as of sacred authority, have many things well worth your attention; particularly the admirable book called ECCLESIASTICUS, and the book of WISDOM. But, in the course of reading which I advise, these must be omitted till after you have gone through the Gospels and Acts, that you may not lose the historical thread.

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## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE biographic part of the New Testament is above all human estimation, because it contains the portraiture of 'him in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' If it were, therefore, our hard lot to say what individual part of the Scriptures we should wish to rescue from an otherwise irreparable destruction, ought it not to be that part which describes to us the conduct and preserves to us the instruction of *God manifest in the flesh*? Worldly Christians have affected sometimes to prefer the Gospels to the rest of the New Testament, on the intimated ground that our Saviour was a less severe preceptor, and more of a mere moralist, than his inspired followers, whose writings make up the sequel of the New Testament. But never surely was there a grosser delusion. If the object be to probe the heart of man to the centre; to place before him the terrors of that God, who to the wicked 'is a consuming fire;' to convince him of that radical change which must take place in his whole nature, of that total conquest which he must gain over the world and himself,

before he can be a true subject of the Messiah's spiritual kingdom; and of the desperate disappointment which must finally await all who rest in the mere profession, or even the plausible outside of Christianity; it is from our Lord's discourses that we shall find the most resistless means of accomplishing each of these awfully important purposes.

To the willing disciple our Saviour is indeed the gentlest of instructors; to the contrite penitent he is the most cheering of comforters; to weakness he is most encouraging; to infirmity, unspeakably indulgent; to grief, or distress of whatever sort, he is a pattern of tenderness. But in all he says or does, he has one invariable object in view, to which all the rest is but subservient. He lived and taught, he died and rose again, for this one end, that he might 'redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of *good works*.' His uniform declarations, therefore, are—'Ye can not serve God and Mammon. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.' 'Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me, he can not be my disciple.'

To corrupt human nature these lessons can never be made engaging. Their object is to conquer, and finally to eradicate that corruption. To indulge it, therefore, in any instance, is wholly to reject them; since it is not with particular vices that Christ contends, nor will he be satisfied with particular virtues. But he calls us, indispensably, to a *state of mind*, which contains, as in a root or principle, all possible virtue, and which avoids, with equally sincere detestation, every species of

evil. But to human nature itself, as distinct from its depravity, to native taste, sound discriminating sense, just and delicate feelings, comprehensive judgment, profound humility, and genuine magnanimity of mind, no teacher upon this earth ever so adapted himself. In his inexhaustible imagery; his appropriate use of all the common occurrences of life; his embodying the deepest wisdom in the plainest allegories, and making familiar occurrences the vehicle of most momentous instruction; in the dignified ease with which he utters the profoundest truths; the majestic severity which he manifests where hollow hypocrisy, narrow bigotry, unfeeling selfishness, or any clearly deliberate vice called forth his holy indignation; in these characters we recognize the purest, and yet most popular; the most awful, and yet the most amiable of all instructors. And when we read the Gospels with rightly prepared hearts, we see him with our mind's eye, as he actually was in this world, scarce less effectually than those who lived and conversed with him. We too 'behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

The Acts of the Apostles belong in some degree to the biographic class. Where the matter of a work is of the deepest moment, the mere agreeableness of its manner is of less importance. But where a striking provision has been made for pleasure, as well as benefit, it would be ingratitude as well as insensibility not to notice it. It is indeed impossible for a reader of taste, not to be delighted with the combination of excellencies, which this short but most eventful narrative exhibits. Nothing but clearness and accuracy appear to be aimed at, yet everything which can give interest to such a

work is attained. Neither Xenophon nor Cæsar could stand a comparison with it. St. Luke in this piece has seen everything so clearly, has understood it so fully, and has expressed it so appositely, as to need only a simple rendering of his own exact words in order to his having, in every language, the air of an original.

The epistolary part of the New Testament is, perhaps, that with which the generality of readers are least acquainted. Some profess to be discouraged by the intricacy of the sense, particularly in the writings of St. Paul; and others fairly acknowledge, that they conceive this part of Scripture to be of less moment, as being chiefly occupied in obsolete controversies peculiar to the time in which they were written, consequently uninteresting to us. Though our limits do not admit of a particular reply to those unfounded prejudices, yet we can not forbear regretting, what appears to be a lamentable ignorance of the nature and design of Christianity, which distinguishes our times, and which has given rise to both these suppositions. They, for example, who regard religion but as a more sublimated system of morality, and look for nothing in the Scripture but rules of moral conduct, must necessarily feel themselves at a stand, when something infinitely deeper seems to present itself before them. But if it were first fully known what the Christianity of the Apostles actually was, their sentiments would soon become intelligible. They treat of Christianity as an inward principle still more than as a rule of conduct. They by no means neglect the latter; but the former is their leading object; in strict observance of that maxim, so variously given by their divine master—‘Make the tree good and its fruit

will be good.' They accordingly describe a process, which, in order to real goodness, must take place in the depths of the heart. They detect a root of evil, which disqualifies man for all real virtue, and deprives him of all real happiness. And they describe an influence proceeding from God himself, through a divine Mediator, ready to be communicated to all who seek it, by which this evil nature is overcome, and a holy and heavenly nature formed in its room. They describe this change as taking place by means of the truths and facts revealed in the Gospel, impressing themselves by the power of God's holy Spirit upon the mind and heart; in consequence of which new desires, new tastes, new powers, and new pursuits succeed. Things temporal sink down into complete subordination to things eternal; and supreme love to God and unfeigned clarity to man, become the master passions of the soul. These are the subjects which are chiefly dwelt on in the Epistles, and they will always in a measure be unintelligible to those who do not 'receive the truth in the love of it.' Even in many human pursuits, actual practice is indispensable to a clear understanding of the principles.

If this be a fair state of the case, ought we not to study these portions of Scripture with an attention suitable to their acknowledged depth, instead of attempting to force a meaning upon them, at the expense of common sense, in order to make them seem to correspond with our superficial religion? Should we not rather endeavor to bring our religion to a conformity with their plain and literal import? Such attempts, sincerely made, would soon give clearness to the understanding; and a more than philosophic consistency, as well



as a more than human energy, would be found there, where all before had seemed perplexed and obscure. We do not, however, deny, that the Epistles contain more reference than the Gospels to Jewish customs, and to a variety of local and temporary circumstances not well understood by us. Yet, though written to individual men, and to particular churches; not only general inferences, applicable to us, may be drawn from particular instructions, but by means of them, the most important doctrines are often pointedly exhibited.

Where this truly Christian discernment is exercised, it will be evident how much it softens and enlarges the heart! how it extends and illuminates the mental view! how it quickens and invigorates the feeling! how it fits the mind for at once attending to the minutest, and comprehending the vastest things! In short, how pure, how wise, how disinterested, how heavenly,—we had almost said how morally omnipotent it makes its complete votary!

On this head we will add but one remark more. Even through the medium of a translation, we observe a remarkable difference of manner in the apostolic writers. There is indeed a very close resemblance between the views and topics of St. Paul and St. Peter, though with much difference of style. But St. James and St. John differ from both these, and from each other, as much as any writers could, who agree cordially in one general end. The Christian philosopher will be able to account for this difference by its obvious correspondence with what he sees daily in natural tempers. In St. John he will discover the cast and turn of a sublimely contemplative mind, penetrating the inmost springs of moral action, and viewing the heart as alone

secured and perfected by an habitual filial reverence to, and, as he expresses it, 'communion with the Father of Spirits.' In St. James he will see the marks of a plain and more practical mind, vigilantly guarding against the deceits and dangers of the world, and somewhat jealous lest speculation should, in any instance, be made a pretext for negligence in practice. And lastly, he will perhaps recognize in St. Paul, that most powerful character of mind, which, being under the influence of no particular temper, but possessing each in its full strength, and all in due temperament, gives no coloring to any object but what it actually possesses, pursues each valuable end in strict proportion to its worth, and varies its self-directed course, in compliance with no attraction, but that of truth, of fitness, and of utility. In such a variety, then, he will find a new evidence to the truth of Christianity, which is thus alike attested by witnesses the most diversified; and he will, with humble gratitude, adore that condescending wisdom and goodness, which has thus, within the sacred volume itself, recognized, and even provided for, those distinctions of the human mind, for which weak mortals are so unwilling to make allowance in each other.

The prophetic part is mentioned last, because it peculiarly extends itself through the whole of the divine volume. It commences with the first encouraging promise which was given to man after the primeval transgression, and it occupies the last portion of the New Testament. It might naturally have been expected, that in a revelation from the Sovereign of all events, the future designs of Providence should be so far intimated, as clearly to convince a more than human foresight, and by con-

sequence a divine origin. It might also have been thought probable, that those prophecies should embrace so extended a series of future occurrences, as to provide for successive confirmations of the revelation, by successive fulfilments of the predictions. And lastly, it might be thought reasonable, that while such intimations should be sufficiently clear to be explained by the actual event, they should not be so explicit as to gratify curiosity respecting future contingencies; such an anticipation of events being clearly unsuitable to that kind of moral government under which the Author of our nature has placed us.

It is conceived that such precisely are the characters of those predictions which are so numerous in the Scriptures. They point to a continued succession of great occurrences; but, in general, with such scattered rays of light, as to furnish few materials for premature speculation. Even to the prophet himself the prospect is probably enveloped in a deep mist, which, while he looks intently, seems for a short space to open, and to present before him certain grand objects, whose fleeting appearances he imperfectly catches, but whose connexion with, or remoteness from, each other, he has not sufficient light to distinguish.

These remarks, however, apply most strictly to prophecies of remote events. When nearer occurrences are foretold, whether relating to the Jewish nation, or to the countries in its neighborhood, there is often a surprising clearness, as if in these cases, the intention was to direct conduct for the present, as well as confirm faith by the result. And in a few important instances, even distant futurity is so distinctly contemplated, as to make such predictions a permanent, and to every can-

did reader, an irrefragable evidence, that a volume so undeniably ancient, and yet so unequivocally predictive, can be no other than divine.

Of this last class of prophecies, as most directly interesting, it may not be useless to point out the following striking examples:—The denunciation by Moses of what should be the final fate of the Jews, in case of obstinate disobedience.\*—Isaiah's astonishing picture of the sufferings, death, and subsequent triumph of the Redeemer;† a prediction upon which every kind of sophistry has been tried in vain. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, with Daniel's interpretation;‡ a prophecy which contains in it an absolute demonstration of revealed religion.—Daniel's own vision of the four empires, and of that divine one which should succeed them.§ His amazing prophecy of the seventy weeks,|| which, however involved in obscurity as to niceties of chronology, is, in clearness of prediction, a standing miracle; its fulfilment in the death of the Messiah, and the destruction of Jerusalem, being as self-evident as that Cæsar meant to record his own actions in his Commentaries. To these I would add, lastly, that wonderful representation of the papal tyranny in the Apocalypse,¶ which, however involving some obscure circumstances, is nevertheless so luminous an instance as to preclude the possibility of evasion. The extreme justness of the statement respecting papal Rome must force itself on every mind at all acquainted with the usual language of the Old Testament prophets, and with the authentic facts of ecclesiastical history.

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\* Deut. xxviii.

† Isaiah liii.

‡ Daniel ii.

§ Daniel vii.

|| Daniel ix.

¶ Chap. xvi.

Among circumstantial prophecies of near events may be reckoned Jeremiah's prediction of the taking of Babylon\* by the king of the Medes, on which the history of the event, as given by Xenophon in the *Cyropedia*, is the best possible comment. The prophecy of the fall of Tyre in Ezekiel,† in which there is the most remarkable detail of the matter of ancient commerce that is perhaps to be anywhere found. But of all such prophecies, that of our Saviour, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, as given in repeated parables and express denunciations, is most deeply worthy the attention of the Christian reader.

A question has been started among scholars respecting the double sense of prophecy; but it seems astonishing to any plain reader of the Bible how it could ever become a matter of doubt.—What can be more likely, for instance, than that some present event in which David was interested, perhaps his inauguration, suggested to him the subject of the second psalm? Yet what can be more evident than that he describes a dominion infinitely beyond what can be attributed to any earthly potentate? The fact seems to be, that the Jewish dispensation being, in its most leading parts, a prefiguration of the Christian dispensation and the most celebrated persons, as well as events, being typical of what was to come, the prophetic spirit could not easily contemplate the type without being carried forward to its completion. And, therefore, in almost every case of the kind, the more remote object draws the attention of the prophet, as if insensibly, from the nearer,—the greatness of the one naturally eclipsing the comparative

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\* Jeremiah i. and li.

† Ezekiel xxvi. and xxvii.

littleness of the other. This occurs in such a number of instances so as to form one of the most prominent characters of prophecy.

The Acts of the holy Apostles endowed with the Holy Ghost, and authorized by their divine Master, come next in order to be read. Nothing can be more interesting and edifying, than the history of their actions ;—of the piety, zeal, and courage, with which they preached the glad tidings of salvation ;—and of the various exertions of the wonderful powers conferred on them by the Holy Spirit, for the confirmation of their mission.

The character of St. Paul, and his miraculous conversion, demand your particular attention : most of the apostles were men of low birth and education ; but St. Paul was a Roman citizen ; that is, he possessed the privileges annexed to the freedom of the city of Rome, which was considered as a high distinction in those countries that had been conquered by the Romans. He was educated amongst the most learned sect of the Jews, and by one of their principal doctors. He was a man of extraordinary eloquence, as appears not only in his writings, but in several speeches in his own defence, pronounced before governors and courts of justice, when he was called to account for the doctrines he taught.—He seems to have been of an uncommon warm temper, and zealous in whatever religion he professed : this zeal, before his conversion, showed itself in the most unjustifiable actions, by furiously persecuting the innocent Christians : but, we see a miracle employed to convince him of his mistake, and to bring him into the right way. 'This example may assure us of the mercy of God towards mistaken consciences, and ought to inspire us with the most enlarged

charity and good will towards those whose erroneous principles mislead their conduct: instead of resentment and hatred against their persons, we ought only to feel an active wish of assisting them to find the truth, since we know not whether, if convinced, they might not prove, like St. Paul, chosen vessels to promote the honor of God and of true religion.

Next follow the EPISTLES; which make a very important part of the New Testament; and you can not be too much employed in reading them. They contain the most excellent precepts and admonitions, and are of particular use in explaining, more at large, several doctrines of Christianity, which we could not so fully comprehend without them. There are, indeed, in the Epistles of St. Paul, many passages hard to be understood: such, in particular, are the first eleven chapters to the Romans; the greater part of his Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians; and several chapters of that to the Hebrews. Instead of perplexing yourself with these more obscure passages of Scripture, I would wish you to employ your attention chiefly on those that are plain; and to judge of the doctrines taught in the other parts, by comparing them with what you find in these. It is through the neglect of this rule, that many have been led to draw the most absurd doctrines from the Holy Scriptures.—Let me particularly recommend to your careful perusal, the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. In the 14th chapter, St. Paul has in view the difference between the Jewish and Gentile, or Heathen, converts at that time: the former were disposed to look with horror on the latter, for their impiety in not paying the same regard to the dis-

tinctions of days and meats, that they did ; and the latter, on the contrary, were inclined to look with contempt on the former, for their weakness and superstition. Excellent is the advice which the apostle gives to both parties : he exhorts the Jewish converts not to judge, and the Gentiles not to despise ; remembering, that the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but rightcousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Endeavor to conform yourself to this advice ;—to acquire a temper of universal candor and benevolence : and learn neither to despise nor condemn any persons on account of their particular modes of faith and worship ; remembering always that goodness is confined to no party ; that there are wise and worthy men among all the sects of Christians ;—and that to his own Master, every one must stand or fall.

The Epistle of St. JAMES is entirely practical, and exceedingly fine : you cannot study it too much. It seems particularly designed to guard Christians against misunderstanding some things in St. Paul's writings, which have been fatally perverted to the encouragement of a dependence on faith alone, without good works. But the more rational commentators will tell you, that by the works of the Law, which the Apostle asserts to be incapable of justifying us, he means, not the works of moral rightcousness, but the ceremonial works of the Mosaic law, on which the Jews laid the greatest stress, as necessary to salvation. But St. James tells us, that, 'if any man among us seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.' And that pure religion, and undefiled before God the Father, is this : 'To visit the father



less and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'—Faith in Christ, if it produce not these effects, he declares is dead, or of no power.

The Epistles of St. PETER are also full of the best instructions and admonitions, concerning the relative duties of life; amongst which are set forth the duties of women in general, and of wives in particular. Some part of the second Epistle is prophetical; warning the church of false teachers, and false doctrines, which would undermine morality, and disgrace the cause of Christianity.

The first Epistle of St. JOHN is written in a highly figurative style, which makes it, in some parts, hard to be understood; but the spirit of divine love, which it so fervently expresses, renders it highly edifying and delightful. That love of God and of man, which this beloved Apostle so pathetically recommends, is in truth the essence of religion, as our Saviour himself informs us.

The Book of REVELATION contains a prophetical account of most of the great events relating to the Christian church, which were to happen from the time of the writer, St. John, to the end of the world. Many learned men have taken a great deal of pains to explain it; and they have done this in many instances very successfully: but, I think, it is yet too soon for you to study this part of Scripture; some years hence perhaps there may be no objection to your attempting it, and taking into your hands the best expositions to assist you in reading such of the most difficult parts of the New Testament as you can not now be supposed to understand.—May Heaven direct you in studying this sacred volume, and render it the means of making you wise unto salvation!—May you love

and reverence, as it deserves, this blessed and invaluable book, which contains the best rule of life, the clearest declaration of the will and laws of the Deity, the reviving assurance of favor to true penitents, and the unspeakably joyful tidings of eternal life and happiness to all the truly virtuous; through Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Deliverer of the world!

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### THE DUTY OF ACQUIRING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

RELIGIOUS knowledge forwards all useful and ornamental improvements in society. Experience shows that in proportion as it diffuses its light, learning flourishes, and liberal arts are cultivated and advanced. Just conceptions of religion promote a free and manly spirit. They lead men to think for themselves; to form their principles upon fair inquiry, and not to resign their conscience to the dictates of men. Hence they naturally inspire aversion to slavery of every kind; and promote a taste for liberty and laws. Despotic governments have generally taken the firmest root among nations that were blinded by Mahometan or Pagan darkness; where the throne of violence has been supported by ignorance and false religion. In the Christian world, during those centuries in which gross superstition held its reign undisturbed, oppression and slavery were in its train. The cloud of ignorance sat thick and deep over the nations; and the world was threatened with a relapse into ancient barbarity. As soon as the true *knowledge of the Lord* revived, at the auspicious era of the

reformation, learning, liberty, and arts, began to shine forth with it, and to resume their lustre.

But the happy influence which religion exerts on society, extends much farther than to effects of this kind. It is not only subsidiary to the improvement, but necessary to the preservation of society. It is the very basis on which it rests. Religious principle is what gives men the surest hold of one another. That last and greatest pledge of veracity, an oath, without which no society could subsist, derives its whole authority from an established reverence of God, to whom it is a solemn appeal. Banish religious principle, and you loosen all the bonds which connect mankind together; you shake the fundamental pillar of mutual confidence and trust; you render the security arising from laws, in a great measure, void and ineffectual. For human laws and human sanctions can not extend to numberless cases, in which the safety of mankind is deeply concerned. They would prove very feeble instruments of order and peace, if there were no checks upon the conduct of man from the sense of Divine legislation; if no belief of future rewards and punishments were to overawe conscience, and to supply the defects of human government.

Indeed, the belief of religion is of such importance to public welfare that the most expressive description we could give of a society of men in the utmost disorder, would be to say that there was no fear of God left among them. Imagination would immediately conceive them as abandoned to rapine and violence, to perfidy and treachery; as deceiving and deceived; oppressing and oppressed; consumed by intestine broils, and ripe for becoming a prey to the first invader. On the

other hand, in order to form the idea of a society flourishing in its highest glory, we need only conceive the belief of Christian principle exerting its full influence on the hearts and lives of all the members. Instantly the most amiable scene would open to our view. We should see the causes of public disunion removed, when men were animated with that noble spirit of love and charity which our religion breathes, and formed to the pursuits of those higher interests which give no occasion to competition and jealousy. We should see families, neighborhoods, and communities, living in unbroken amity, and pursuing, with one heart and mind, the common interest; sobriety of manners and simplicity of life restored; virtuous industry carrying on its useful labors, and cheerful contentment everywhere reigning. Politicians may lay down what plans they please for advancing public prosperity; but, in truth, it is the prevalence of such principles of religion and virtue which forms the strength and glory of a nation. Where these are totally wanting, no measures contrived by human wisdom can supply the defect. In proportion as they prevail, they raise the state of society from that sad degeneracy into which it is at present sunk, and carry it forward, under the blessing of Heaven, towards that happy period, when *nations shall not lift up their sword against nations, nor learn war any more.*

In order to prove the importance of religious knowledge to the interests of society, one consideration more, deserving particular attention, remains to be mentioned. It is, that if *good seed* be not sown in the field, *tares* will infallibly spring up. The propension towards religion is strong in the human heart. There is a natural preparation

in our minds for receiving some impressions of supernatural belief. Upon these, among ignorant and uncultivated men, superstition and enthusiasm never fail to graft themselves. Into what monstrous forms these have shot forth, and what various mischiefs they have produced to society, is too well known. Nor is this the whole of the danger. Designing men are always ready to take advantage of this popular weakness, and to direct the superstitious bias of the multitude to their own ambitious and interested ends. Superstition, in itself a formidable evil, threatens consequences still more formidable when it is rendered the tool of design and craft. Hence arises one of the most powerful arguments for propagating with zeal, as far as our influence can extend, the pure and undefiled doctrines of the Gospel of Christ; in order that just and rational principles of religion may fill up that room in the minds of men which dangerous fanaticism will otherwise usurp.

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### THE CULTIVATION OF THE CONSCIENCE.

THE next duty after acquiring knowledge, particularly of moral truths, is to cultivate the faculty by which we judge of moral conduct. This, by some, has been called the moral sense, but is generally known by the name of conscience. Like all other faculties, it is, in its power and acuteness, under the influence, to a certain degree, of education and culture. It is both an active, and an intellectual power.—It is intellectual, inasmuch as by it, we have our notions of right and wrong, merit and demerit, and all moral obligation or sense of duty. It is active, inasmuch as the per-

formance of every duty, of every action receiving approbation, must be more or less influenced by it, or excited by its dictates. Like the other powers of the mind, it comes gradually to perfection, and its progress is much influenced by instruction and unrestrained exercise.

Some have imagined, that the ideas of sweet and sour, reside in the mind or senses, altogether independent of the object to which they are referred, and therefore must depend on the state of the mind. That, in the same way, the ideas of virtue and vice, right and wrong, are independent on a moral sense in which, and not in the actions or things themselves, these qualities lie. According to this theory, the sole use of reason is to distinguish between truth and falsehood, whilst virtue and vice, like the notions of beauty and deformity, belong to taste, morality depending on the peculiarity of the sense which is to perceive it. This theory, subversive of all radical distinction of good and evil, rests on mere assertion, for our notions of right and wrong must be referred to reason and not to taste. The distinctions of right and wrong are not arbitrary, more than the qualities of sweet and hot. They are immutable, and their nature and existence are no more affected by our taste and judgment, than truth or falsehood, or, than the shining of the sun is dependent on a man perceiving his light.

If, then, there be a natural distinction between right and wrong, there must be some power of the mind, capable of discovering the difference, in the same way as there is a capability of discriminating between truth and falsehood. Blessed be God who hath made us rational creatures, and endowed us with those faculties which, if rightly exercised,

lead to happiness and peace. We have a faculty by which we judge of our conduct, and the decisions it forms are attended with personal feelings and affections, with a strong sentiment of approbation or disapprobation. They gratify and reward the man, who acts according to the dictates of conscience, or a sense of duty.—They torment and punish him who transgresses its laws.

In Scripture, we find mention made of a ‘pure conscience,’ by which we may understand a faculty, capable of readily distinguishing between right and wrong, a well instructed conscience, and the power of discerning that which is holy. We also read of a conscience void of offence, and the testimony of a good conscience, by which we understand that the dictates of conscience, the decrees of the court, have been obeyed, and that the sentence is favorable. On the other hand, we are told of blindness of mind, and, of a mind and conscience, which are defiled. We therefore, from Scripture as well as from reason, may prove the necessity of possessing a good, that is an enlightened conscience, and the testimony of a conscience void of offence, that is the approbation of this well instructed faculty. It is the duty of every man to cultivate his conscience, which is done, by making himself well acquainted with the will of God, and those duties ordained by him, and by diligently attending to, and implicitly and promptly obeying the natural admonitions given by conscience, even to those who are not acquainted with Christianity. It is generally, I do not say universally, the case, that the first and instantaneous decision given on any point, by the unsophisticated conscience, is the most correct. For it often happens during subsequent deliberation, that the judgment comes to be

warped, by the special pleading of the inclination. It must, farther, be carefully recollected, that the faculty is apt, imperceptibly, to be influenced by passions and various causes, and therefore, it is necessary to compare our judgment with deductions from the proper principles of action, and particularly with the rules delivered in the word of God. Paul thought he acted right in persecuting the Christians, and his error lay, not in following the dictates of a misguided conscience, but in not using all the means in his power to obtain better information, in not candidly examining the grounds on which Christianity rested. A man is always culpable, even when he follows the dictates of conscience, if his conduct be wrong, provided he has neglected any one mean in his power, of instructing his judgment.

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#### THE REGULATION OF THE PASSIONS AND DESIRES.

ANOTHER essential duty is the regulation of our passions, and desires, according to the rules of propriety and virtue.

Virtue is a steady and fixed purpose of the heart, to adhere to principles approved by the sense of duty, to act according to a rule consonant to the judgment, and declared by it to be duty. Strictly speaking, it is the performance of every duty in a perfect manner, and therefore it is not to be found in any mortal. Particular virtues are fixed and perpetual purposes, to perform particular duties, as duties. One act of justice, or of benevolence, does not constitute a just, or a benevolent man. An act



of justice may even be performed without any regard to justice, and merely from the influence of passion, or the feeling of the moment. To be an act of virtue, it must be performed from a sense of duty. Virtues have been divided into four, which were called cardinal, and from which all the rest sprung. These are justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude, giving rise to benevolence, charity, patience, and all those other virtues which adorn and comfort human life.

Vice is the omission of a duty, or the violation of a positive law. It generally originates from the passions, as virtue does from reason and conscience. It is not an original principle in the mind, for in that case it must have been conferred by the Creator. But it is a perversion of our faculties; and to produce a single vice, the perversion is often very complex. All principles which are good, were originally implanted in man, and he had, by consequence, a principle leading him to dislike and disapprove of evil, though evil did not then exist in his knowledge. When, by sad experience, he acquired the knowledge of good and evil, and his nature became debased, and changed, then, either by desires, in themselves natural and proper, being carried to a degree disproportionate to the value of their object, or, by the passions overcoming reason, vice was produced.

For our present purpose, the operations of mind may be divided into three classes. First, those which are strictly intellectual, as, our apprehensions of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil, our perceptions of existence and qualities, and the simple operations of the rational faculties, of judgment, imagination, memory, &c. These are not necessarily productive, either of

feeling, or of volition. Second, those which are associated, with sense of duty, and are accompanied with fixed purpose of conduct, which constitute virtues and vices. Third, those accompanied with considerable feeling, and which are styled passions. These different operations may be blended together, and may pass into each other. It is, also, necessary to observe, that there is a great connexion between the mind and the body, so that many corporal desires excite, directly or indirectly, different passions, and passions affect, more or less, the body.

The passions have, by some, been divided into animal, selfish and social; or, by others, into benevolent and malevolent. In the moral view, some are, in their nature, good, some bad, and others indifferent. Altogether, they constitute the greatest part of the moral life of man, for the intellectual speculations would be of no practical consequence, if they had no influence on the desires and passions. It is of the utmost consequence, to our present peace, and everlasting happiness, that these be so regulated, as to correspond with the strictest rule of propriety, and with the perfection of our nature. Perfection, indeed, is not to be obtained in this life, but happy is he, who strives most, to acquire the command of his passions. A regulated state of the passions, implies an improved state of the intellectual powers. We have two classes of motives, or incitements, to moral action. The one comprehends the passions and desires which belong to man, as an animal; the other, the rational faculty, peculiar to him, as an intellectual being. These are often at variance, and occasion a competition between the flesh and the spirit. There is no doctrine more mistaken

nor more mischievous, than this—that what is natural, is innocent. Yet, under due regulation, our natural desires are all innocent, but, like irregularities of the mind, they may become the cause of evil. We are all, naturally, disposed to eat when hungry; but does it thence follow, that it is proper, or allowable, to eat that which is not our own, and interfere with the rights of another, or to eat to gluttony.

With regard to the passions, the efforts of man have been directed, either, to obtain a complete command over them all, and to repress their operation, or, to eradicate one class and cultivate another. The stoics, or philosophers of the porch, affected, after their master Zeno, to subdue the passions completely, and have them so under control, that they should neither feel pain nor pleasure, be devoid of pity to others, and happy themselves in the midst of tortures. The philosophers of the garden, or disciples of Epicurus, attended chiefly to pleasure and pain, seeking the one, and avoiding the other. We must not, however, be altogether misled by words, for the Epicurean philosophers placed true pleasure, not in sensual gratification, but in a prudent care of the body, and a steady government of the mind. What the two greatest schools of ancient philosophy could not accomplish, the religion of Jesus teaches to Christians. It does not profess to eradicate or destroy that which God hath given to man, but instructs him how to regulate the gift, to his advantage and tranquillity.

All operations of the mind, accompanied with much feeling, are more powerful than others, and more to be dreaded and suspected, as principles of action. Passion is, at the best, a doubtful guide;

for even the worst passions, during their full influence, seem, to the deluded mind, to be reasonable and proper. They obscure the judgment, as effectually as intoxication, and it is not until they subside or be gratified, that the spell is dissolved, and a correct view of the conduct obtained. It is therefore a good and a safe rule, never to act merely from the impulse of passion, at least, when the action is to be to the detriment of others or of ourselves. From the consequences of strong passions, and the uncertain moral results to which they lead, it is desirable to check every extravagant degree, even of those which are of a social and happy nature. It is, however, not merely useful, but an urgent duty, to encourage all those ideas which give the mind an habitual tendency towards the benevolent affections, and promote the just operation of happy feelings. This is best done by dwelling on the doctrines of the gospel, which strongly inspire sentiments of humility, contentment, gratitude, love, hope, and joy.

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#### REGULATION OF THE THOUGHTS. -

A FOURTH duty, connected with, and essential to the last, is, a careful regulation of the train of thought, particularly with a view to acquire good habits. Habit is an original principle of the mind, which must always operate. The mind is like a garden, which, if it be not stocked with goodly plants and flowers, must be overrun with useless or noxious weeds. When the thoughts are left to wander at discretion, we find, that they often follow each other without any particular connexion,

and at last end in some remote point, either by that point being often resorted to, or by something having, more accidentally, determined to it. In other instances, we find that ideas become so associated, that when one is excited, another particular one almost invariably follows it. This happens in consequence of our strongly, or repeatedly, connecting one idea with another. Some have referred the association of ideas to habit, whilst others reverse the matter, and refer habit to association.

It is of no practical importance to determine the question, but it is of the greatest consequence to remember the existence of the principle, and to endeavor, by a careful command over the mind, by early and constant vigilance, to acquire such a train of thinking, as leads from vain imaginations, from vicious objects, or sinful sentiments, to useful reflection, to virtuous principles, or Christian graces. It is of the highest importance to check sinful thoughts, to abstain from unholy desires, to extinguish the first spark of vicious passion, or the sallies of an ungoverned imagination; whilst, on the other hand, we encourage whatever tends to invigorate the intellectual powers, and hallow the heart, or amend the conduct. For, it is an invariable rule, that whatever we allow ourselves to think frequently, or deeply, upon, will return often and spontaneously. The mind becomes gloomy, or cheerful, envious, or benevolent, devout, or sensual, fitted for study, or incapable of reflection, according to the regulation of the thoughts. It is impossible to tell to what contemptible imbecility, to what vicious frame of mind, an undisciplined state of the thoughts may lead; nor, on the other hand, to what degree the understanding and the heart may, through the blessing of God,

be improved, by constant diligence, and watching over the process of thinking. Besides having this in view, we must be careful to obtain correct or true associations; that is, to associate ideas which naturally ought to be connected, and to attach uniformly to, or connect with, each idea, its true quality. How often do thoughtless men connect ideas, or conduct, not with their true and vicious qualities, but, solely, with the ideas of spirit, of pleasure, or of some virtue. The duty I have recommended, enables a man, by the blessing of God, to judge correctly, to keep his mind pure, and to have his conversation in heaven.

I can not quit this subject, without pointing out the incalculable importance of regulating this principle in childhood, endeavoring to produce associations, which are true and beneficial: and also, as far as possible, by books of instruction and conversation, to encourage such trains of thought as shall improve the mind, and purify the heart.

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### MEDITATION.

MEDITATION may be considered as a branch of this duty, or as implied under it. But it is so far different, that it is a voluntary direction of the mind, to some specific subject, for the purpose of understanding it better, or procuring, through it, greater improvement of the heart. Meditation, however, is different from investigation, though the two processes are often conjoined. Investigation in morals, is the search after truth and knowledge. Meditation is reflection on the qualities of the principles discovered, and deductions of moral excellence from moral truths. Hence, it is a pow-

erful mean of producing devotional feeling. Investigation, meditation, and devotion, are frequently conjoined; and, indeed, in a pious mind, the two last are rarely separated from the first.

Meditation implies previous knowledge, and the improvement of it to a useful purpose. He who meditates on the love of Christ, must know what Christ hath done for him; and he who knows the doctrine of redemption, and frequently thinks upon it, naturally has active desires respecting it. No man expects to improve in science, or any branch of knowledge, who does not frequently think on the object of his study, and consider all its relations and qualities. The more intensely he thinks, and the oftener he directs his attention to it, the fonder does he become of it, and the greater proficiency does he make. In this way, mathematics, the philosophy of the mind, chemistry, astronomy, are acquired, improved, and relished. Now, although redemption be the gift of God, and illumination the work of his Spirit, yet, we are everywhere taught, that the mind must exert its powers, and are called to strive for greater perfection.

Meditation is one of the appointed means for obtaining this. The habitual train of thought which we encourage, must have a powerful influence on the heart and conduct. Every repeated operation of the mind, every renewed emotion or passion, tends to strengthen a particular habit. On this principle it is, that the dispositions of mankind so generally vary, according to the circumstances under which they are placed, and that tempers come to be established. Mental, like corporeal operations, are much under the power of habit; and the oftener that the attention is directed to a particular object, the better it is understood

and relished. It is as vain to say that a man may be a good Christian, who seldom thinks of religion, as that a man may become a good mathematician, who never studies propositions. We are not to expect a miracle, that the power of God will be exerted, to inform the understandings, and elevate the desires of those who continue careless and slothful, and who think but little of the doctrines of the gospel. It is absurd to expect this, and it could not take place, without, from that moment, making them no longer careless and indifferent. We are, therefore, safe in judging of ourselves, for, with others, we have nothing to do, by this rule, that if we seldom think of God, and the riches of his mercy, if we seldom meditate on the love of Christ, if we have no pleasure in thinking of all his wondrous works, and of these, the greatest to us is redemption, in studying how we may serve him better, in trying to love him more, in endeavoring to abstract our thoughts from earth, and have our conversation in heaven, we have indeed too certain grounds to fear, that we are yet far from the land of safety.

Meditation implies not only communion with God, but also with our own hearts, or self-examination. Who that meditates on the law of God, can do it, abstractedly, without applying it to himself, and examining his conformity or his failure? Who that thinks of the redemption through Christ, and the joys of heaven, does so, without asking his heart if this redemption and these joys be for him? The apostle who says, 'meditate on these things,' says also, 'examine yourselves.'

Meditation improves our knowledge, and promotes habitual piety. It is productive of a devotional spirit, of self-examination, of self-denial, and



of particular virtues, according to the concurrence of circumstances at the time. Nor are we ever to forget, that in our meditations, we approach nearer to God, and are more immediately under the influence of his Spirit, who enlightens the understanding, and directs the heart and thought. David, who is styled the man after God's own heart, was frequent in his meditation. His earnest desire was to know the precepts of God, and to meditate on his law. In his description of a good man, he expressly says, 'His delight is in the law of God, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' This was his own practice, as we learn from the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, one of peculiar excellence: 'Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate on thy word.' Did we meditate half so much on the statutes of God, as we do on the dreams and vanities of this world, how different would be our progress in religion, and how much greater our happiness? Where the treasure is, there the heart will be also.

Language, which is only expressive of ideas, may be the same, under very different degrees of impression. 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,' are the words of the heavenly anthem. This language of heaven may be uttered on earth, this hymn of the redeemed may be sung by those who are only on their way to the city of its King. But the knowledge which, in that glorious place, calls forth the ascription of praise, the comprehension of the height and the depth of the love of the Saviour, the warm, ecstatic feeling, which is there enjoyed, can not be conceived here. There are limits, and narrow, indeed, they are, to the powers of the soul on earth; but one star differeth not more from another, in glory, than one soul does

from another, in its power, and in its triumph over the earth, and in its approach to the feelings and the joys of heaven; and it seems established, that the more earnest the attempt, and the more deep and constant the meditation, the more does the soul, by the grace of God, not only obtain a victory over the principles of the world, but the higher is it permitted to soar, above its former powers, and the more does it know, not only of the language of heaven, but of that joy, and of those perceptions and feelings, of which it is expressive, and of the gratitude, and love, and adoration, which shall penetrate the spirit above, in contemplating this truth, that God so loved the world, as to give his own Son, for the redemption of the humble, who will come unto him.

Love to Christ, is the point to which all our thoughts must tend. All meditation, productive of joy and consolation, whatever its subject may be, has a reference to our love of Jesus. Whether the sentiment be that of gratitude or humility, of resignation or hope, whether the subject be, the propitiation of a Redeemer, the promise of the Spirit, the hope of glory, the dissolution of our body, or our entrance into the glorious assembly of saints above, and a re-union with departed friends, still, however the subject vary, wherever the thought be directed, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and intermixes with every thought, and predominates over all. Or, rather, it is the source whence all good proceeds, and without which no joy could be felt.

Meditation on the love of God to us, must comprehend the astonishing display of mercy, in the sacrifice of Christ for us, and can not fail to sug-

gest to our minds the cause of this sacrifice, and our personal connexion with it.

Meditation on the evil of sin, the hatred of God to it, its predominance in our nature, our inability to escape from its dominion and its consequence, otherwise, than by the grace of God, produces, on the one hand, humility, on the other, gratitude to God. Humility, and self-abasement, with a true sense of our guilt, and of our incapacity to save ourselves, may produce keen feeling, but can not directly produce joy; yet, these are the springs, whence joy and every Christian grace proceed, for the gratitude which they inspire, is productive of praise and 'joy unspeakable.' What shall I render to the Lord? is the grateful exclamation which bursts forth. Wherever the sense of guilt, or humility, is keen, and the soul has faith in Christ, the keenness of the sense of guilt, produces a corresponding keenness, in the feeling of gratitude. There is no holy joy, more to be desired and regarded, than that which proceeds from a strong feeling of our own necessity; for, to whom much is forgiven, the same must love much.

Meditation on the strictness of the law of God, and our obligation to obedience, must make us sensible of our sin, thankful for a Saviour, and anxious to have every thought and action brought into subjection to the law of God.

Meditation on the promise of the Spirit, gives us good hopes of present grace, of constant perseverance, and of final triumph.

Meditation on the good providence of God, confirms and invigorates our trust, our patience, our gratitude, and love.

Meditation on our own decease, and on the world to come, tends to raise the mind far above this life;

and, whilst we anticipate the time, when our heart and our flesh shall faint and fail, we are comforted with the promise of support, and, through Christ, rejoice in the hope of glory. The prospect of meeting with our dear friends, who have gone before us, pours a rich balm of consolation into the afflicted spirit, and naturally increases our diligence to be followers of those, who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises.

Finally, the various reflections which embrace the articles of our belief, the perfections of God, and extensive history of redemption, confirm and increase our faith, and promote peace and joy in believing.

I need enforce no farther the performance of this duty, in favor of which it would, indeed, be difficult to say too much. When we consider its importance, under the blessing of God, in making us acquainted with ourselves, in improving our Christian knowledge, in promoting our personal religion, and habitual piety, and in making us experience the consolations of the gospel, there can be no room for farther recommendation, of resorting to this appointed mean, of invigorating our Christian life, not only at stated times, but also at every occasional opportunity, during our waking hours.

‘Whatsoever things are true,’ says Paul, ‘whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, *think* on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in us, *do*, and the God of peace shall be with you.’

## ON THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

THE duty of forgiveness is implied in the injunction of loving our enemies, and it is likewise delivered, as a special command, by our Lord, and repeatedly enforced on Christians by his apostles. Jesus, in a discourse to his disciples, said, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' How little do the enemies of God think of his love, which bestows on them so many blessings of his providence! It is his sun which shines upon them, and cheers them; it is his rain which waters their fields; it is his bounty which feeds, clothes, and comforts them. If this be the conduct of God, surely, they who are children of God, must act after the same manner. We are told, by St. Luke, that our Lord enjoined his disciples, if their brother injured them seven times a-day, and seven times repented, that they should forgive him. From a passage in the gospel by St. Matthew, it is probable that they were disposed to take this in the literal sense, for they inquired, if they should forgive their brother seven times in a day? The reply was, 'I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven;' and to illustrate the matter farther, Jesus delivered a parable, the conclusion of which is, that he who did not forgive his debtor, as he had been forgiven by his master, was delivered 'to the tormentors, or prison-keepers, till he should pay all that was due by him;' and the application made is this—'So like-

wise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother.' So important is the duty, that we are taught to pray, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;' we are taught to make a solemn appeal to God, that we have performed this duty. The apostles enforce the necessity of forgiveness, in strong terms, particularly from the argument that we are, through Christ, forgiven. The Ephesians are exhorted to be kind, 'forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you;' and Peter admonishes the saints to love, 'not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.' There can scarcely be a more powerful motive, superadded to the express command of God, than the recollection of our own sins and infirmities, our guilt in the sight of God, and our failures in duty to our brethren. If we hope to be forgiven through Christ, certainly, we ought to forgive others; and when we feel resentment beginning, or are inclined to entertain thoughts injurious to our brother, it would be well, if, for a moment, we thought of these words, 'Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone.'

The gospel forbids the indulgence of hatred to our enemy, even if he continue in enmity; we are to pray for him, and love him. Jesus on the cross prayed, saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;' and his martyr, Stephen, who fell asleep in Jesus, just as he was quitting this life, kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' But the command goes farther; for, if our brother repent, we are not merely to forgive him, but to be recon-

ciled to him. The murderers of Stephen repented not; they asked no forgiveness, yet he, in the spirit of his Lord, prayed for them, and forgave them. Had they confessed their error, and sought forgiveness, it is not to be doubted that in his last moments he would have held out to them the hand of reconciliation, and received them as brethren. With regard to our conduct towards an offending brother, our Lord gives explicit directions, which are recorded by St. Matthew. We are to deal candidly and frankly with him. We are not to brood over his conduct, and nourish resentment and hatred, but we are to expostulate with him in private. If he hear thee, saith our Lord, thou hast gained thy brother, but if he will not hear, then we are to take one or two along with us, that they may be witnesses; if he be still refractory, we are to acquaint the church; and, adds the Lord, if he despise the church, then he is to be condemned as a pagan. Yet even then, though our intercourse may cease, we are not to hate him, but pray for him, and bless him. It is evident that it must be a great offence which calls for this formal conduct; for, the Christian is enjoined not to be apt to take offence, and is to pass over many grounds of complaint, viewing them as unintentional, or unimportant. He is commanded to bear with his brother, as well as to forgive him, to be exceedingly unwilling to construe anything into an injury, to suffer long before he be offended. The duty of patience or long-suffering, is associated with that of forgiveness. God is not only called a God of love, a forgiving God, but also the God of peace and of patience. He, then, who wishes to be a follower of God, must be peaceable and patient. This is the duty of a Christian. But whenever he

is offended, there are two modes of procedure directed. The first is, quietly to pursue such a conduct as shall, by its gentleness and kindness, show the aggressor how inexcusable he is in remaining injurious, and thus a gradual but sincere reconciliation is tacitly accomplished. Accordingly Paul says, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,' which shall subdue his enmity, and refine his heart. The second is to come as soon as possible to an explanation, in the true spirit of meekness, and, on finding that he is convinced of his error, to forgive him, and be cordially reconciled to him.

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#### GENTLENESS.

A CONSEQUENCE of love is gentleness, which, together with meekness, is enumerated by Paul as a fruit of the Spirit. Meekness is a mild forbearing disposition, accompanied with, or proceeding from, humility and love. Gentleness is a soft and kindly manner or deportment, and must be conjoined with, or productive of, a frank obliging conduct to equals, condescension to inferiors, and dutiful respect to superiors. The apostle Paul says, 'Condescend to men of low estate;' and a meek and quiet spirit is declared by Peter, to be, in the sight of God, of great price, and he was, indeed, justified in saying so, even although he had not been inspired. For, his Master had said, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land,' the heavenly Canaan; and on another occasion, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly,' or condescending. He who lives not in the spirit of meekness,



lives not in the Spirit of Christ. Those who are truly meek, have had both pride and anger subdued. They are mild, and humble, loving, and peaceable. There is no reason why we should follow one part of the Spirit of Christ, and not every part. If we are to imitate him in obedience, in patience, in resignation, we must imitate him also in love and in meekness. Some, from natural temper, and early habits, find it more difficult to follow one path than another; but whatever the difficulty may be, they must follow the Lord whithersoever he goeth. The patient and irascible are alike commanded to be meek; and he who is disposed to pride and passion, must consider it as a necessary part of his self-denial and self-government, to live continually in the spirit of meekness. He who is thoroughly meek, will be gentle and kind to all men. The Christian is polite from principle, for true politeness consists in being gentle, obliging, and refraining from whatever can hurt the feelings of another. There is no better rule for acquiring this conduct, than to place ourselves mentally in the situation of others, and sincerely to do unto them as we would wish them to have done to us in their situation. This produces the most delicate attention to the feelings of others, and the most kind and endearing conduct towards them. Harshness always implies a hard heart, or an unthinking head. Haughtiness and contempt of others, indicate not merely the want of Christianity, but either the deficiency or misimprovement of education and instruction. In general, it may be observed, that he who has risen from a low station, is less condescending, and more haughty than him, who, from birth, has been accustomed to move in a high sphere, and

who has no apprehension about his rank or dignity suffering by affability, but who as he is polite to his equals, so is he, even in a greater degree, to him who appears to be neglected. In many respects a good education, and the advantage of having mixed in good company, will produce, though from different motives, the same gentleness and true politeness as Christianity. This gentleness, this Christian meekness, is not confined to one time or place, but operates at all times and everywhere, represses anger, pride, and contumely, promotes all the kind offices of society, strengthens those ties which bind one man to another, and connect them in the varied intercourses of life. Were we to turn our eyes from our neighbor to ourselves, and reflect on our true character in the sight of God, our deportment would be indeed humble, our conduct mild and unassuming, and with deep contrition of heart we would acknowledge, that pride is not made for man.

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### ENTHUSIASM.

WE never seriously suppose that any one can be too wise, too pure, or too benevolent. If at any time we use a language of this apparent import, we always conceive the idea of some spurious intermixture, or injudicious mode of exercise. But when we confine our thoughts to the principle itself, we do not apprehend that it *can* become too predominant,—to be too virtuous, being just as inconceivable as to be too happy.

Now if this be true of any single virtue, must it not hold equally good respecting the parent

principle of all virtue?—What is religion, or devotion (for when we speak of either, as a principle, it is, in fact, a synonyme of the other) but the ‘loving what God has commanded, and desiring what he has promised, as that, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found?’ Now can there be excess in this? We may doubtless *misunderstand* God’s commands, and *misconstrue* his promises, and, in either way, instead of attaining that holy and happy fixedness of heart, become the victims of restless perturbation. But if there be no error in our apprehension, can there be any excess in our love? What does God *command*? Everything that tends to our personal, social, political, as well as eternal well-being. Can we then feel too deep love for the sum of all moral excellence? But what does God *promise*? Guidance, protection, all necessary aids and influences here; and hereafter, ‘fullness of joy and pleasures at his right hand for evermore.’ Can such blessings as these be too cordially desired? Amid

The heartaches and the thousand natural shocks  
Which flesh is heir to,

can our hopes of future happiness be too cheering, or our power of rising above the calamities of mortality be too habitual, or too effectual? Such are the questions obviously suggested by the supposition of such a thing as excess in religion. And doubtless the answer of every serious and reflecting mind must be, that ‘in pure and undefiled religion,’ in ‘loving the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and our neighbor as ourselves,’ the idea of *excess* is as incongruous and

inadmissible, as that of a happy life being too long, or of the joys of heaven being less desirable because they are eternal.\*

But if, instead of cultivating and advancing in this love of God and man,—instead of loving what God has really commanded, and desiring what he has clearly promised in his holy word,—this word be neglected, and the suggestions of an ardent, or of a gloomy fancy be substituted in its room, then the person becomes in the strictest and truest sense, a fanatic; and as his natural temperament may happen to be sanguine or saturnine, he rises into imaginary raptures or sinks down into torturing apprehensions, and slavish self-inflctions.

Here then, if I am not mistaken, we may discover the real nature of both enthusiasm and superstition. It is not *excess* of devotion which constitutes the one, nor *excess* of religion in general which leads to the other. But both are the consequence of a *radical misconception* of religion. Each alike implies a compound of ignorance and passion; and as the person is disposed to hope or fear, he becomes enthusiastical on the one hand, or superstitious on the other. He in whom *fear* predominates, most naturally mistakes *what God commands*, and instead of taking that *law* for his rule, ‘whose seat is the bosom of God, and whose voice the harmony of the world,’\* in a most unhappy manner becomes a law unto himself, multiplying observances, which have nothing to recommend them, but their irksomeness or uncouthness; and acting as if the way to propitiate his Maker were by tormenting himself. He, on the contrary, in whom the *hopeful* passions are prevalent, no less naturally misconceives what *God has promised* and

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\* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, conclusion of the first book.

pleases himself with the prospect, or persuades himself into the imaginary possession of extraordinary influences and supernatural communications. Both, it is evident, mean to pursue religion, but neither has sufficient judgment to ascertain its real nature. Perhaps, in general, some mental morbidness is at the bottom, which, when of the depressive kind, disposes to the superstitious view of religion, and when of the elevating kind, to the enthusiastical.

Religion, the religion of the Scriptures, is itself an exquisite temperament, in which all the virtues of which man is capable, are harmoniously blended. He, therefore, who studies the Scriptures, and draws thence his ideas and sentiments of religion, takes the best method to escape both enthusiasm and superstition. Even infidelity is no security against either. But it is absolutely impossible for an intelligent votary of scriptural Christianity to be in any respect fanatical. True fanatics, therefore, are apt to neglect the Scriptures, except so far as they can turn them to their own particular purpose. The Romish church, for example, became negligent of the Scriptures, nearly in proportion as it became superstitious. And every striking instance of enthusiasm, if inquired into, will be found to exemplify the same dereliction. In a word, Christianity is eternal truth, and those who soar *above* truth, as well as they who sink *below* it, equally overlook the standard by which rational action is to be regulated ; whereas to adhere steadily to this, is to avoid all extremes, and to escape, not only the tendency toward pernicious excess, but any danger of falling into it.

Did we accustom ourselves to exact definitions, we should not only call the disorderly religionist

an enthusiast ; we should also feel, that if irrational confidence, unfounded expectations, and assumptions without a basis, be enthusiasm, then is the term most justly applicable to the mere worldly moralist. For does not he wildly assume effects to be produced without their proper means, who looks for virtue without piety ; for happiness without holiness ; for reformation without repentance ; for repentance without divine assistance ; for divine assistance without prayer ; and for acceptance with God without regard to that Mediator, whom God has ordained to be our great high priest ?

But, while accuracy of definition is thus recommended, let it not be forgotten, that there is need on all sides of exercising a candid judgment. Let not the conscientious Christian suspect, that the advocate for morality intends by the term to depreciate religion, unless it appear that he makes morality the root as well as the produce of goodness.—Nor let the moralist, whose affections are less lively, and whose views are less elevated, deem the religious man a fanatic, because he sometimes adopts the language of Scripture to express feelings to which human terms are not always adequate. We mean not to justify, but to condemn, as a gross defect of good sense, as well as of taste and elegance, that ill-conditioned phraseology, which, by disfiguring the comeliness of piety, lessens its dignity, and injures its interests. Doubtless, a good understanding can not be more usefully exercised, nor can the effects of mental cultivation be better shown, than in bringing every aid of a sound judgment, and every grace of a correct style, into the service of that divine religion, which does not more contain all that is just and pure, than its coalesces with all that is ‘lovely, and of good report.’

## CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

To neglect works of charity, not to be largely liberal in the performance of them according to our ability, is an infallible evidence that our professions of piety mean nothing. On the other hand, to depend upon them as what is to bear us out in our claims for heaven before the tribunal of God, is to offend our Maker and deceive our own souls. We would be the very last to undervalue or to discourage charity, but is it discouraging it to place it on its true ground; to assert that we may build an hospital without charity, as we may endow a church without piety, if we consider the one as an expiation for sin, or the other as a substitution for holiness?

Some are ingenious in contriving, by a strange self-delusion, to swell the amount of their charity by tacking to it extraneous items of a totally distinct character. An anecdote is related of a lady of rank who, though her benevolence was suspected to bear no proportion to the splendor of her establishment, was yet rather too apt to make her bounties a subject of conversation. After enumerating the various instances of her beneficence, she often concluded by saying, ‘notwithstanding my large family, I give all this in charity, *besides paying the poor rates* ;’ thus converting a compulsory act, to which all are equally subject, into a voluntary bounty.

Our corruptions are so liable to infect even our ‘holy things,’ that we should be vigilant in this best exercise of the best affections of the heart—affections which God, when he graciously converted a duty into a delight, gave us, in order, by a pleasurable feeling, to stir us up to compassion.

We should be careful that the great enemy may not be plotting our injury, even when we are performing actions the most hostile to his interests.

As there is not a more lovely virtue in the whole Christian code, so there is not one which more imperatively demands our attention to the spirit with which we exercise it, and the temper with which we bear the disappointment sometimes attending our best designed bounties. Though charity is too frequently thrown away on those who receive it, it is never lost on the benefactor, if 'he who gives does it with simplicity.'—When the bountiful giver can not find pleasure, he may always extract good, he may reap no small advantage himself from that liberality which has failed to confer any. He may gain benefit from the disappointment he experiences in the unworthiness of the object. When the project he had anxiously formed for doing good to another is defeated by perverseness, or requited by ingratitude, it not only does not check the spring of bounty in the real Christian, but it calls new virtues into action. The exercise of patience, an improvement in forbearance and forgiveness, a stronger conviction that we must not make the worthiness of the object the sole measure of our bounty, are well worth the money we have spent on the undeserving. Perhaps, too, the reiterated instances how little good the best man is able to do in this world may serve to wean him from it, and be an additional inducement for looking forward to a better.

But it is much easier to relieve our neighbor's wants than to bear with his errors; the one gratifies our natural feelings, while the other offends them: the most difficult as well as the most sublime branch of charity, therefore, is the forgive-



ness of injuries, is the love of our enemies. It is a love humbly aiming to resemble His who sends his rain on the just and on the unjust; a love not inspired by partiality, not extorted by merit. It is following the example while we obey the precept of Christ, when we 'do good to them that hate us.' It is a charity which bursts with a generous disdain the narrow bounds of attachment and even of desert, levels every fence which selfish prudence would erect between itself and its enemies; it is a love—with respect to the objects, though with a boundless disproportion as to the measure—resembling God's love to us; it aims to be universal in kind, though it is low in the degree.

A very able divine\* has insisted that it is to this part of the character of the Almighty that our Saviour limits the injunction, 'Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' It is, indeed, one of the principal instances in which finite creatures can by imitation approximate to the character of God; most of his attributes rather requiring us to adore, than leaving it possible for us to imitate them. For though all the attributes of God afford the most exalted idea of complete perfection, yet the injunction to attain his image is strikingly applied in the New Testament to this particular part of the divine character. The Apostle applies our being 'followers of God, as dear children,' afterwards to this individual instance, 'forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you,' adding, 'and walk in love as Christ also loved us.' 'So that,' says the bishop, 'his exhortation to follow God stands inclosed

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\* See Bishop Sherlock's sermon on the text 'Be ye perfect,' &c. &c.

on both sides with the precepts of love and charity, as if he intended to secure it from being applied to anything else. St. Luke, who gives us an abridgment of the same sermon on the mount from which the passage is taken, also suggests the practice of love and forgiveness from the example of the Almighty, 'who is kind to the unthankful and the evil.' After having delivered the same beatitude, he corroborates the interpretation with an injunction, by saying, not be *perfect*, but 'be merciful as your Father also is merciful.'

Our Saviour impressed a solemn emphasis on the command to forgive the offences of others, when he implicated it with God's forgiveness of us. It is to be feared that many who would think it an act of disobedience to omit the daily repetition of the divine prayer, of which this request forms so striking a clause, do not lay to heart the daily duty of supplicating for that frame of spirit which the petition involves. Can there be a more awful consideration than that we put the grand request on which our eternal happiness depends on this issue, when we inseparably associate our own hope of pardon with the required and reasonable condition of pardoning others? Should we not be conscientiously cautious how we put up this petition, when we reflect that we offer it to the great Searcher of hearts, who, while he listens to the request, can exactly determine on the integrity which accompanies it? The divine Author of the prayer seems to hold out a sort of test of the spirit of our obedience, when he proposes this difficult duty as a trial of our general conformity to his commands. It seems selected by infinite wisdom as a kind of pledge of our submission to his will in all other points: our interest is confederate

with our duty in the practice of this high and peculiarly Christian grace. The requisition suggests at once the most absolute obligation, and the most powerful motive.

This forgiveness seems not only to be one of the grand distinctions between the religion of the heathen and the Christian world, but to form a considerable difference between the duties inculcated in the Old and the New Testament. In the former, indeed, there were not only indications and suggestions of this rule, but some exemplifications of its actual performance. It is remarkable, that when David, whose energy of character, or rather mysterious inspiration as a prophet, led him to be so vehement in his denunciations of vengeance on persons of professed enmity against God, and against himself as the anointed of God, yet exhibited eminent instances of placability in his conduct towards his own personal enemies, especially in the case of Saul. But, perhaps, the duty, after all, was not so fully made out, so clearly defined, so positively enjoined, nor was the frame of mind so evidently seen in 'them of old time.' We have many instances under that dispensation, of saints and prophets laying down their lives for their religion, but it was reserved for the first New Testament martyr, when expiring under a shower of stones from his enemies, to say, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' The reason is obvious. It being expected that our notions and practices should be adapted to the revelation under which we live, this sublime species of charity should necessarily rise in proportion to the clearness and dignity of that dispensation. It is congruous, therefore, that our forgiveness of injuries should be exercised in far higher perfection under the

Gospel, the professed object of which was to make a full and perfect revelation of the pardon of sin by the blood of a Redeemer. And we can only be said to have a conformity to his image, in proportion as we practise this grace. Let us, however, remember, to borrow the thought of an eminent divine, 'that our forgiving others will not alone procure forgiveness for ourselves, while our not forgiving others is a plain proof that we ourselves are not forgiven.'

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#### ON THE EXERTIONS OF PIOUS LADIES.

WE are now about to tread, which we do with a fearful and timid step, on tender ground. It is with mingled respect and reluctance we venture to touch on certain delicate points which affect the sincerely pious, persons who equally avoid all eccentricity in doctrine, and negligence in practice; yet among whom little errors may hereafter creep in, the very consequence, perhaps, of that increasing and inestimable blessing—religious society. It is to be feared they may incur the hazard of raising in others objections against religion, by their honest zeal to promote it.

The persons to whom we presume to allude, are of that sex in which, perhaps, most piety is to be found, and who are in so many respects essentially advancing its cause.—Their services are so materially useful, that it would be a subject of deep regret, if, by any slight inadvertence, their value should ever be diminished. We are too often led to complain of *deficiencies* in religion; we are now to speak—not of its excess, for we believe there is

no such thing—but rather to guard the truly pious against the possibility of inconveniences, which, should they arise, would be a diminution of their usefulness.

The thoughtless and dissipated, indeed, who haunt unsocial crowds, and lay out their talents for that world which they have chosen for their portion, find their reward where they seek it, in the admiration of that world where they flutter and shine.—The others patiently wait for theirs in that single sentence, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ Yet though it is painful to say a syllable which might look like disapprobation, when only caution is intended, may we hazard a few words, not of censure, but of friendly intimation?

May not those large portions of time, and strength, and spirit, so generously spent abroad by zealous Christians, in the most noble exertions of religious charity, be sometimes suffered to trench, in some measure, upon the imperious course of domestic life, upon those pleasing and sacred duties for which HOME is a name so dear? May they not be so exhausted by external concerns, that they may be in danger of entering with diminished interest on the retired exercises of the closet? All business, even religious business, is apt to produce a hurry and bustle in the mind, and an agitation in the spirits, which the most serious persons lament, as being attended with some disqualification for personal improvement. ‘My mother’s children gave me their vineyards to keep, but mine own vineyard have I not kept,’ was the pathetic lamentation of the ancient church. They had engaged her in labors and difficulties which she feared had in some measure impeded the progress of her own spiritual concerns. It was in her own

house, at Bethany, that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus. We fully admit, however, not only the complete *compatibility*, but the expediency of uniting what we owe to those abroad, and to ourselves and families at home; the highest characters are those who combine both. We are not combating, but applauding a zeal, which we fervently hope may never be suppressed, if it should ever require to be somewhat regulated.

There is no part of Christian duty which more requires us to look well to the motive by which our actions are set a-going. It is of importance to examine whether our most useful, if busy pursuits, are not influenced by a natural fondness for bustle, an animal activity, a love of notice. Whether even the charitable labors grow not more from a restless spirit than from real piety. Let us observe, however, that though these defective motives may at first excite the zeal of some, yet by a perseverance in well-doing, assisted by humble prayer, the motive may at length become as pure as the act is undoubtedly right.

It is asserted, but we trust with more severity than justice, that there is a growing tendency in some truly excellent persons to introduce show and display in their religion; a tendency not quite consistent with the interior, spiritual nature of Christianity. It is not so much an evil *we* are guarding against, as the appearance of evil. Their sex, like their religion, is of a sober character; and the tendency to which we are alluding, may create a suspicion that religion, even among good people, is not so much considered as a thing between God and their own soul, as we know it really is; for we are far from suspecting the secret communion with their God and Saviour is not considered as

their primary duty. And we are willing to believe that the effect of this duty will always be visible in producing that sobriety and simplicity, which so conspicuously and so beautifully distinguish the religion of the New Testament.

The religion of Jesus is utterly without parade ; it affects no publicity. It is enough for his servants to believe that their heavenly Father, who sees them in secret, sees them with an approving eye.

As they have got above acting from the fear of man, the next step is to get above acting for his praise ;—the excessive applause and commendation of their Christian friends begin, in reality, still more to be watched against than the reproach of the irreligious. The one teaches them to be circumspect, the other may in time induce them to believe that circumspection is no longer necessary. This negligence, if it do not make them do wrong, may lead them to be too much elated with doing what is right.

But there are higher motives for the use of discreet reserve in the Christian's mind, than what regards merely their personal character. However pure in motive, however innocent in action, they must be careful not to have their good evil spoken of. They must be scrupulously cautious of not bringing the least reproach on the cause dearest to their affections. Pious persons can not but know, that with the utmost care to avoid adding to the offence, which Christian truth, however discreetly exhibited, necessarily gives, that many are looking out for pretences to discredit not only the professor, but the profession itself. But if they should hereafter see any of those improprieties for which they are looking out ; if any indiscretion should be

found where it is sedulously sought, Christianity would suffer, and impiety triumph.

We sincerely hope that certain sharp-sighted observers, who are keenly on the watch for anything that may discredit serious piety, who are peeping in at every crevice, through which they think they may detect any real or supposed ground of censure, may never be gratified with the discovery of what they so industriously seek. But it is obvious, that where they can detect no substantial fault, they take comfort in finding a foible; where there is no deformity, they triumphantly carry away a blemish, and are ready to make the most of the slightest imperfection. And a speck, which would not be perceived in an ordinary form, is conspicuous on that which is white and pure.

This, by a little perversion, and not a little exaggeration, not only of fact but of conjecture, is propagated till it becomes a mischief. In the detection of the slightest flaw in characters of eminent piety, they go away rejoicing, as if they had found some hidden treasure. And it is well, perhaps, even for the best Christians, that there are such critical inspectors; and the knowledge that they are watched will answer an excellent purpose, if it set them on watching themselves.

Am I then an enemy to Christian exertion? God forbid! It is the glory of our age, that among the most useful and zealous servants of our divine Master, are to be found, of 'devout and honorable women not a few.' Ladies, whose own education not having been limited to the harp and the sketch-book, though not unskilled in either, are competent to teach others what themselves have been taught; who disdain not to be employed in the



humblest offices of Christian charity, to be found in the poorest cottage, at the bed-side of the sick and dying; whose daughters, if not the best *waltzers*, are the best *catechists*; whose houses are houses of prayer, whose closets are the scene of devout meditation; who, not contented with the stinted modish measure of a single attendance on public worship, so contrive to render the hours of repast subservient to those of duty, as to make a second visit to the temple of their God; and who endeavor to retain the odor of sanctity, shed on the sacred day, through the duties of the week.

But to pursue the subject in a different, though not distant direction, we can not too much commend those valuable persons whom neither fortune, rank, nor any temporal advantages, have been able to seduce to follow those vain pursuits, whose light, and in some cases, dangerous amusements, are so eagerly sought by the votaries of pleasure. We can not but admire, that all these energies which others are wasting in idle diversions, or employments little better than idleness, are, by those excellent persons, devoted to purposes of religion, and religious or useful charities.

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The opening of the nineteenth century has been a period for the display of extraordinary energies, exerted in every sort of direction. They had been powerfully exerted in bringing on the late revolution. All the energies of France, whether in science, talent, wit, or wealth, were combined in one huge engine for the establishment of Atheism on the proposed ruins of Christ and his kingdom. We hope this grand device was partly foiled, even *there*. In the general assault, some skirmishes

were fought in this country ; but here a counter-attack was made. ' Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels, and prevailed.' ' The accuser of the brethren was cast down.'

Afterwards the human scourge of mankind in the same foreign country, by a singular energy of character, aided by an unprecedented combination of circumstances, to which the previous contempt of religion had led the way, projected the most exorbitant enterprises, and accomplished them by the most successful perseverance in every species of political and moral mischief. In imitation of one whom the enormity of his crimes would almost warrant us in calling his grand inspirer, his labors were perhaps more energetic, because ' his time was short.' Here again Michael made a counter-attack on the dragon. For it is to the same powerful energies, exerted in the contrary direction, that we may ascribe those numberless noble and beneficial societies at home, which promise to effect a moral change in the condition, not of one country, not of one Continent, but of the whole globe, and by which we hope finally, through the divine blessing, ' to beat down Satan under our feet.'

But this has not only been a period for exerting the energies of countries and communities ; they have been exerted under different situations by different characters, and to opposite purposes, by individuals ; they have been remarkably exhibited in private persons, in a sex where energy is less expected to break out into fearless action ; in Charlotte Corday, in Madame Roland, and other political enthusiasts abroad, all acting with the spirit of the heroines of pagan Rome, and actuated by a religion much resembling theirs.

At home, the best energies of the human mind have been exerted to the best purposes, by private individuals also, and exerted without any departure from modesty, prudence, and simplicity, the sacrifice of which would ill repay the accomplishment of the most popular action.

It would be unpardonable in our remarks on well directed energies, to pass over one instance, on which we trust, there can not be two opinions. If some of the novelties of the present period are its errors, others are its glory. It is cheering to the weary pilgrim, in traversing the desert of this sinful world, to have the eye here and there refreshed with a verdant spot, yielding not only beauty, but fertility.

In alluding to certain recent undertakings which reflect honor on humanity, it would be unjust to omit one which reflects honor on our sex. Justice, as well as gratitude, would be wounded, were no tribute to be paid to the most heroic of women.

The reader will have anticipated, that we allude to the female Howard.\* Hers is almost (her sex considered) a higher strain of Christian heroism. Unprotected and alone, she dared to venture into scenes that would appal the stoutest heart, and which the single principle alone by which she was actuated could have sustained hers. With true Christian courage, she ventured to explore the dreary abodes of calamity and crime, of execration and despair. She took 'the gauge of misery,' not as a matter of curiosity, or philosophical speculation, but with the holy hope of relieving it. The favor of Him who stopped the mouths of the lions

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\* Mrs. Fry.

in the prophet's den, stopped those of these scarcely less savage beings. Her mild demeanor awed their rebellious spirits into peace.

Her visit was not the sudden ebullition of a charitable fit. It was the result of deliberate reflection, and doubtless of fervent prayer. She had long been projecting the means how to assist these most desperate and forlorn of human kind. She had conceived a hope, that what was flagitious might not be incorrigible; and adopted a well-digested plan for their religious instruction.

But she knew human nature too well, not to know that religious instruction would be very inefficacious, without correcting inveterately bad habits. Together with a few pious and able associates of her own sex,\* she instituted a school of reform and industry, found manual employment for those who had never worked, and Christian instruction for those who had never been taught. The lips that had been seldom opened but to blaspheme their Maker, were taught to praise Him; the hands hitherto employed in theft, were employed in honest labor. Infants, in a doubly lamentable sense, born in sin, and bred in vice, were snatched from a destruction which had appeared inevitable, and put into a train of improvement. The gloomy mansion which had lately been a scene of horror, only to be exceeded by those more dreadful future mansions to which it was conducting them, changed its face. The loathsome prison, which had witnessed nothing but intoxication and idleness; had heard no sounds but those of reviling and of imprecation, gradually became a scene of comparative decency, sobriety, and order.

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\* Among these Mrs. Steinkopff stands in the first rank

If ever a charity of so extensive and public a nature could have been pleaded as some excuse for the remission of domestic duties, this might have been considered as the one exempt case, but it was not so. If she stole some hours from her family to visit the prison, she stole some hours from sleep to attend to her family.

Happily, goodness is contagious as well as sin. We may now say in a *good* sense, 'Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' Distant places have caught the flame. The bright example is already imitated by other ladies in some of our great towns, and will probably take a more ample range.

May we conclude this part of our subject by observing, that ladies of other religious professions would do well to copy, in certain respects, the example of the females of the society to which this distinguished lady belongs; giving in to no habits of dissipation, they have time; addicted to little expense in personal decoration, they have money; and the time and money thus snatched from vain and frivolous purposes, are more wisely directed together into the same right channel of Christian benevolence.



## PROPRIETY OF BEHAVIOUR.

IN order to walk wisely in a perfect way, it is of importance that we study propriety in our actions and general behaviour. There are few precise rules of conduct that can be applied alike to all. In some of the fundamental virtues, indeed, no circumstance can admit the least variation.

There are no situations, for instance, in which truth, justice, and humanity, are not required equally from all. But, in a great number of the duties of life, the manner of discharging them must vary according to the different ages, characters, and fortunes of men. To suit our behaviour to each of these, to judge of the conduct which is most decent and becoming in our situation, is a material part of wisdom. Without this attention to propriety, virtue will lose much of its grace and efficacy; nay, good dispositions may degenerate into mere weaknesses and follies. The behaviour, for instance, which would be engaging in youth, is unsuitable to advanced years. What is innocent gaiety in the one, becomes culpable levity in the other; and to assume in youth that authority and dignity to which years only give any title, is impertinent affectation. In like manner, to the different ranks of men in society, there belongs a different strain of manners. Whatever is either above or below that line of life in which Providence has placed us, hurts every impartial observer, and suits not the propriety of virtue. What is proper dignity in one station may in another be presumptuous arrogance; and while suitable dependence belongs to those of inferior rank, it ought not to sink into a degrading servility. With a change in the situation of our fortunes, our duties obviously change. What was commendable frugality in one condition may become sordid parsimony as our estate rises; and the generosity required of the affluent turns into extravagance and injustice when our circumstances are impaired.—In all those attentions to propriety, some regard will of course be had to the opinions which the world forms of us. No man has a title to despise

altogether what the world thinks, and what it expects from him. But this regard to the sentiments of others must never go so far as to enervate on what a man's own conscience tells him it is his duty either to do or to forbear doing. In the scale by which we measure the propriety of our conduct, the opinion of the world must never be the preponderating weight.



## CIRCUMSPECTION.

To be humble and modest in opinion, to be vigilant and attentive in conduct, to distrust fair appearances and to restrain rash desires, are instructions which the darkness of our present state should strongly inculcate. God hath appointed our situation to be so ambiguous, in order both to call forth the exertion of those intelligent powers which he hath given us, and to enforce our dependence on his gracious aid. *It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.* Surrounded with so many bewildering paths, among which the wisest are ready to stray, how earnestly should we implore, and how thankfully should we receive that divine illumination which is promised in Scripture to the pious and the humble! *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He will guide them with his counsel. He will teach them the way that they should choose.* But what must be the fate of him, who, amidst all the dangers attending human conduct, neither looks up to Heaven for direction, nor properly exerts that reason which God hath given him? If, to the most diligent inquirer, it proves so difficult a task to distinguish true

good from those fallacious appearances with which it is ever blended, how should he discover it who brings neither patience nor attention to the search ; who applies to no other counsellor than present pleasure, and, with a rash and credulous mind, delivers himself up to every suggestion of desire ?

This admonition I particularly direct to those who are in a period of life too often characterized by forward presumption and headlong pursuit. The self-conceit of the young is the great source of those dangers to which they are exposed, and it is peculiarly unfortunate, that the age which stands most in need of the counsel of the wise, should be the most prone to condemn it. Confident in the opinions which they adopt, and in the measures which they pursue, they seem as if they understood Solomon to say, not, *Who knoweth*, but, who is ignorant of *what is good for man all the days of his life* ? The bliss to be aimed at is, in their opinion, fully apparent. It is not the danger of mistake, but the failure of success, which they dread. Activity to seize, not sagacity to discern, is the only requisite which they value. How long shall it be, ere the fate of your predecessors in the same course teach you wisdom ? How long shall the experience of all ages continue to lift its voice to you in vain ? Beholding the ocean on which you are embarked covered with wrecks, are not those fatal signals sufficient to admonish you of the hidden rock ? If, in Paradise itself, there was a tree which bore fruit fair to the eye, but mortal in its effects, how much more, in this fallen state, may such deceiving appearances be expected to abound ! The whole state of Nature is now become a scene of delusion to the sensual mind. Hardly anything is what it appears to be. And



what flatters most is always farthest from reality. There are voices which sing around you; but whose strains allure to ruin. There is a banquet spread, where poison is in every dish. There is a couch which invites you to repose; but to slumber upon it is death. In such a situation, *be not high-minded, but fear*. Let sobriety temper your unwary ardor. Let modesty check your rash presumption. Let wisdom be the offspring of reflection now, rather than the fruit of bitter experience hereafter.

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#### ON THE PECULIAR DUTIES OF THE YOUNG.

**SOBRIETY** of mind is one of those virtues which the present condition of human life strongly inculcates. The uncertainty of its enjoyments checks presumption; the multiplicity of its dangers demands perpetual caution. Moderation, vigilance, and self-government are duties incumbent on all; but especially on such as are beginning the journey of life. To them, therefore, the admonition in the text is, with great propriety, directed; though there is reason to fear, that by them it is in hazard of being least regarded. Experience enforces the admonition on the most giddy, after they have advanced in years. But the whole state of youthful views and passions is adverse to sobriety of mind. The scenes which present themselves, at our entering upon the world, are commonly flattering. Whatever they be in themselves, the lively spirits of the young gild every opening prospect. The field of hope appears to stretch wide before them. Pleasure seems to put

forth its blossoms on every side. Impelled by desire, forward they rush with inconsiderate ardor; prompt to decide and to choose; averse to hesitate or to inquire; credulous, because untaught by experience; rash, because unacquainted with danger; headstrong, because unsubdued by disappointment. Hence arise the perils of which it is my design at present to warn them. I shall take *sobriety of mind*, in its most comprehensive sense, as including the whole of that discipline which religion and virtue prescribe to youth. Though the words of the text are directly addressed to *young men*, yet, as the same admonition is given in a preceding verse to the other sex, the instructions which arise from the text are to be considered as common to both. I intend, first, to show them the importance of beginning early to give serious attention to their conduct; and, next, to point out those virtues which they ought chiefly to cultivate.

As soon as you are capable of reflection, you must perceive that there is a right and a wrong in human actions. You see that those who are born with the same advantages of fortune are not all equally prosperous in the course of life. While some of them, by wise and steady conduct, attain distinction in the world, and pass their days with comfort and honor; others of the same rank, by mean and vicious behaviour, forfeit the advantages of their birth, involve themselves in much misery, and end in being a disgrace to their friends, and a burden on society. Early, then, you may learn that it is not on the external condition in which you find yourselves placed, but on the part which you are to act, that your welfare or unhappiness, your honor or infamy, depend. Now, when beginning to act that part, what can be of greater mo-

ment than to regulate your plan of conduct with the most serious attention, before you have yet committed any fatal or irretrievable errors? If, instead of exerting reflection for this valuable purpose, you deliver yourselves up, at so critical a time, to sloth and pleasure; if you refuse to listen to any counsellor but humor, or to attend to any pursuit except that of amusement; if you allow yourselves to float loose and careless on the tide of life, ready to receive any direction which the current of fashion may chance to give you; what can you expect to follow from such beginnings? While so many around you are undergoing the sad consequences of a like indiscretion, for what reason shall not those consequences extend to you? Shall you attain success without that preparation, and escape dangers without that precaution, which is required of others? Shall happiness grow up to you of its own accord, and solicit your acceptance, when, to the rest of mankind, it is the fruit of long cultivation, and the acquisition of labor and care? Deceive not yourselves with such arrogant hopes. Whatever be your rank, Providence will not, for your sake, reverse its established order. The Author of your being hath enjoined you *to take heed to your ways; to ponder the paths of your feet; to remember your Creator in the days of your youth.* He hath decreed that they only *who seek after wisdom shall find it; that fools shall be afflicted because of their transgressions; and that whoso refuseth instruction shall destroy his own soul.* By listening to these admonitions, and tempering the vivacity of youth with a proper mixture of serious thought, you may insure cheerfulness for the rest of life; but by delivering yourselves

up at present to giddiness and levity, you lay the foundation of lasting heaviness of heart.

When you look forward to those plans of life, which either your circumstances have suggested, or your friends have proposed, you will not hesitate to acknowledge that, in order to pursue them with advantage, some previous discipline is requisite. Be assured that, whatever is to be your profession, no education is more necessary to your success than the acquirement of virtuous dispositions and habits. This is the universal preparation for every character and station in life. Bad as the world is, respect is always paid to virtue. In the usual course of human affairs, it will be found that a plain understanding, joined with acknowledged worth, contributes more to prosperity than the brightest parts without probity or honor. Whether science or business or public life be your aim, virtue still enters for a principal share into all those great departments of society. It is connected with eminence in every liberal art; with reputation in every branch of fair and useful business; with distinction in every public station.—The vigor which it gives the mind, and the weight which it adds to character; the generous sentiments which it breathes, the undaunted spirit which it inspires, the ardor of diligence which it quickens, the freedom which it procures from pernicious and dishonorable avocations, are the foundations of all that is high in fame or great in success among men.

Whatever ornamental or engaging endowments you now possess, virtue is a necessary requisite in order to their shining with proper lustre. Feeble are the attractions of the fairest form, if it be suspected that nothing within corresponds to the

pleasing appearance without. Short are the triumphs of wit, when it is supposed to be the vehicle of malice. By whatever arts you may at first attract the attention, you can hold the esteem and secure the hearts of others only by amiable dispositions and the accomplishments of the mind.—These are the qualities whose influence will last, when the lustre of all that once sparkled and dazzled has passed away.

Let not, then, the season of youth be barren of improvements so essential to your future felicity and honor. Now is the seed time of life; and according to *what you sow you shall reap*. Your character is now, under Divine assistance, of your own forming; your fate is, in some measure, put into your own hands. Your nature is as yet pliant and soft. Habits have not established their dominion. Prejudices have not preoccupied your understanding. The world has not had time to contract and debase your affections. All your powers are more vigorous, disembarassed, and free, than they will be at any future period. Whatever impulse you now give to your desires and passions, the direction is likely to continue. It will form the channel in which your life is to run; nay, it may determine its everlasting issue. Consider, then, the employment of this important period as the highest trust which shall ever be committed to you; as, in a great measure, decisive of your happiness in time and in eternity. As, in the succession of the seasons, each, by the invariable laws of nature, affects the productions of what is next in course; so, in human life, every period of our age, according as it is well or ill spent, influences the happiness of that which is to follow. Virtuous youth gradually brings forward accomplished and

flourishing manhood; and such manhood passes of itself, without uneasiness, into respectable and tranquil old age. But when nature is turned out of its regular course, disorder takes place in the moral, just as in the vegetable world. If the spring put forth no blossoms, in summer there will be no beauty, and in autumn no fruit. So, if youth be trifled away without improvement, manhood will be contemptible, and old age miserable. If the beginnings of life have been *vanity*, its latter end can be no other than *vexation of spirit*.

Having thus shown the importance of beginning early to give serious attention to conduct, I come next to point out the virtues which are most necessary to be cultivated in youth.

#### PIETY.

1. I shall first recommend piety to God. With this I begin, both as a foundation of good morals, and as a disposition particularly graceful and becoming in youth. To be void of it argues a cold heart, destitute of some of the best affections which belong to that age. Youth is the season of warm and generous emotions. The heart should then spontaneously rise into the admiration of what is great, glow with the love of what is fair and excellent, and melt at the discovery of tenderness and goodness. Where can any object be found so proper to kindle those affections, as the Father of the universe, and the Author of all felicity? Unmoved by veneration, can you contemplate that grandeur and majesty which his works everywhere display? Untouched by gratitude, can you view that profusion of good which, in this pleasing season of life, his beneficent hand pours around you?

Happy in the love and affection of those with whom you are connected, look up to the Supreme Being, as the inspirer of all the friendship which has ever been shown you by others; himself your best and your first friend; formerly the supporter of your infancy and the guide of your childhood; now the guardian of your youth and the hope of your coming years. View religious homage as a natural expression of gratitude to him for all his goodness. Consider it as the service of the *God of your fathers*; of him to whom your parents devoted you; of him whom in former ages your ancestors honored, and by whom they are now rewarded and blessed in heaven. Connected with so many tender sensibilities of soul, let religion be with you not the cold and barren offspring of speculation, but the warm and vigorous dictate of the heart.

But though piety chiefly belong to the heart, yet the aid of the understanding is requisite to give a proper direction to the devout affections. You must endeavor therefore to acquire just views, both of the great principles of natural religion, and of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. For this end study the sacred Scriptures. Consult the word of God more than the systems of men, if you would know the truth in its native purity. When, upon rational and sober inquiry, you have established your principles, suffer them not to be shaken by the scoffs of the licentious, or the cavils of the sceptical. Remember, that in the examination of every great and comprehensive plan, such as that of Christianity, difficulties may be expected to occur; and that reasonable evidence is not to be rejected, because the nature of our present state al-

lows us only to *know in part, and to see through a glass darkly.*

Impress your minds with reverence for all that is sacred. Let no wantonness of youthful spirits, no compliance with the intemperate mirth of others, ever betray you into profane sallies. Besides the guilt which is thereby incurred, nothing gives a more odious appearance of petulance and presumption to youth, than the affectation of treating religion with levity. Instead of being an evidence of superior understanding, it discovers a pert and shallow mind; which, vain of the first smatterings of knowledge, presumes to make light of what the rest of mankind revere.

At the same time you are not to imagine, that when exhorted to be religious, you are called upon to become more formal and solemn in your manners than others of the same years, or to erect yourselves into supercilious reprovers of those around you. The spirit of true religion breathes gentleness and affability. It gives a native, unaffected ease to the behaviour. It is social, kind, and cheerful; far removed from that gloomy and illiberal superstition which clouds the brow, sharpens the temper, dejects the spirit, and teaches men to fit themselves for another world by neglecting the concerns of this. Let your religion, on the contrary, connect preparation for heaven with an honorable discharge of the duties of active life. Let it be associated in your imagination with all that is manly and useful; *with whatsoever things are true, are just, are pure, are lovely, are of good report, wherever there is any virtue, and wherever there is any praise.* Of such religion discover, on every proper occasion, that you are not ashamed;



but avoid making any unnecessary ostentation of it before the world.

#### MODESTY AND DOCILITY.

II. To piety join modesty and docility, reverence of your parents, and submission to those who are your superiors in knowledge, in station, and in years. Dependence and obedience belong to youth. Modesty is one of its chief ornaments; and has ever been esteemed a presage of rising merit. When entering on the career of life, it is your part not to assume the reins as yet into your hands; but to commit yourselves to the guidance of the more experienced, and to become wise by the wisdom of those who have gone before you.

Of all the follies incident to youth, there are none which either deform its present appearance, or blast the prospect of its future prosperity, more than self-conceit, presumption, and obstinacy. By checking its natural progress in improvement, they fix it in long immaturity; and frequently produce mischiefs which can never be repaired. Yet these are vices too commonly found among the young. Big with enterprise, and elated by hope, they resolve to trust for success to none but themselves. Full of their own abilities, they deride the admonitions which are given them by their friends as the timorous suggestions of age. Too wise to learn, too impatient to deliberate, too forward to be restrained, they plunge, with precipitant indiscretion, into the midst of all the dangers with which life abounds. *Seest thou a young man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.* Positive as you now are in your opinions, and confident in your assertions, be assured

that the time approaches when both men and things will appear to you in a different light. Many characters which you now admire, will by and by sink in your esteem ; and many opinions, of which you are at present most tenacious, will alter as you advance in years. Distrust therefore that glare of youthful presumption which dazzles your eyes. Abound not in your own sense. Put not yourselves forward with too much eagerness ; nor imagine, that by the impetuosity of juvenile ardor, you can overturn systems which have been long established, and change the face of the world. *Learn not to think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think, but to think soberly.* By patient and gradual progression in improvement, you may, in due time, command lasting esteem ; but by assuming, at present, a tone of superiority to which you have no title, you will disgust those whose approbation it is most important to gain. Forward vivacity may fit you to be the companions of an idle hour. More solid qualities must recommend you to the wise, and mark you out for importance and consideration in subsequent life.

#### SINCERITY.

III. It is necessary to recommend to you sincerity and truth. This is the basis of every virtue. That darkness of character, where we can see no heart, those foldings of art, through which no native affection is allowed to penetrate, present an object unamiable in every season of life, but particularly odious in youth. If, at an age when the heart is warm ; when the emotions are strong, and when nature is expected to show itself free and open, you can already smile and deceive, what are

we to look for when you shall be longer hackneyed in the ways of men; when interest shall have completed the obduration of your heart, and experience shall have improved you in all the arts of guile? Dissimulation in youth is the forerunner of perfidy in old age. Its first appearance is the fatal omen of growing depravity and future shame. It degrades parts and learning, obscures the lustre of every accomplishment, and sinks you into contempt with God and man.

As you value therefore the approbation of Heaven, or the esteem of the world, cultivate the love of truth. In all your proceedings be direct and consistent. Ingenuity and candor possess the most powerful charm; they bespeak universal favor, and carry an apology for almost every failing. *The lip of truth shall be established for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment.* Prov. xii. 19. The path of truth is a plain and safe path; that of falsehood is a perplexing maze. After the first departure of sincerity, it is not in your power to stop. One artifice unavoidably leads on to another; till, as the intricacy of the labyrinth increases, you are left entangled in your own snare. Deceit discovers a little mind, which stops at temporary expedients, without rising to comprehensive views of conduct. It betrays at the same time a dastardly spirit. It is the resource of one who wants courage to avow his designs, or to rest upon himself. Whereas openness of character displays that generous boldness which ought to distinguish youth. To set out in the world with no other principle than a crafty attention to interest, betokens one who is destined for creeping through the inferior walks of life. But to give an early preference to honor above gain, when they stand in competition;

to despise every advantage which can not be attained without dishonest arts; to brook no meanness; and to stoop to no dissimulation, are the indications of a great mind, the presages of future eminence and distinction in life.

At the same time, this virtuous sincerity is perfectly consistent with the most prudent vigilance and caution. It is opposed to cunning, not to true wisdom. It is not the simplicity of a weak and improvident, but the character of an enlarged and noble mind; of one who scorns deceit, because he accounts it both base and unprofitable; and who seeks no disguise, because he needs none to hide him. *Lord! who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall ascend into thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.*

#### BENEVOLENCE.

IV. Youth is the proper season of cultivating the benevolent and humane affections. As a great part of your happiness is to depend on the connexions which you form with others, it is of high importance that you acquire betimes the temper and the manners which will render such connexions comfortable. Let a sense of justice be the foundation of all your social qualities. In your most early intercourse with the world, and even in your youthful amusements, let no unfairness be found. Engrave on your mind that sacred rule of *doing all things to others, according as you wish that they should do unto you*. For this end, impress yourselves with a deep sense of the original and natural equality of men. Whatever advantages of birth or fortune you possess, never display them

with an ostentatious superiority. Leave the subordinations of rank, to regulate the intercourse of more advanced years. At present, it becomes you to act among your companions as man with man. Remember how unknown to you are the vicissitudes of the world; and how often they, on whom ignorant and contemptuous young men once looked down with scorn, have risen to be their superiors in future years.

Compassion is an emotion of which you ought never to be ashamed. Graceful in youth is the tear of sympathy, and the heart that melts at the tale of woe. Let no ease and indulgence contract your affections, and wrap you up in selfish enjoyment. But go sometimes to the *house of mourning*, as well as to the *house of feasting*. Accustom yourselves to think of the distresses of human life; as the solitary cottage, the dying parent, and the weeping orphan. *Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt surely give unto him in the day of his need. And thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works.* Deut. xv. 7. 10. Never sport with pain and distress in any of your amusements; nor treat even the meanest insect with wanton cruelty.

In your minds there is commonly a strong propensity to particular intimacies and friendships. Youth, indeed, is the season when friendships are sometimes formed, which not only continue through succeeding life, but which glow to the last with a tenderness unknown to the connexions begun in cooler years. The propensity therefore is not to be discouraged; though, at the same time, it must be regulated with much circumspection and care.

Too many of the pretended friendships of youth are mere combinations in pleasure. They are often founded on capricious likings; suddenly contracted, and as suddenly dissolved. Sometimes they are the effect of interested complaisance and flattery on the one side, and of credulous fondness on the other. Beware of such rash and dangerous connexions, which may afterwards load you with dishonor. Remember, that by the character of those whom you choose for your friends, your own is likely to be formed, and will certainly be judged of by the world. Be slow, therefore, and cautious in contracting intimacy; but when a virtuous friendship is once established, consider it as a sacred engagement. Expose not yourselves to the reproach of lightness and inconstancy, which always bespeak either a trifling or a base mind. Reveal none of the secrets of your friend. Be faithful to his interests. Forsake him not in danger. Abhor the thought of acquiring any advantage by his prejudice or hurt. *There is a friend that loveth at all times, and a brother that is born for adversity. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.* Prov. xvii. 17.—xxvii. 10.

Finally, on this head, in order to render yourselves amiable in society, correct every appearance of harshness in behaviour. Let that courtesy distinguish your demeanor, which springs not so much from studied politeness as from a mild and gentle heart. Follow the customs of the world in matters indifferent, but stop when they become sinful. Let your manners be simple and natural, and of course they will be engaging. Affectation is certain deformity. By forming themselves on fantastic models, and vying with one another in

every reigning folly, the young begin with being ridiculous, and end in being vicious and immoral.

#### DILIGENCE.

V. Diligence, industry, and proper improvement of time, are material duties of the young. To no purpose are they endowed with the best abilities, if they want activity for exerting them. Unavailing in this case will be every direction that can be given them, either for their temporal or spiritual welfare. In youth, the habits of industry are most easily acquired. In youth, the incentives to it are strongest, from ambition and from duty, from emulation and hope, from all the prospects which the beginning of life affords. If, dead to these calls, you already languish in slothful inaction, what will be able to quicken the more sluggish current of advancing years?

Industry is not only the instrument of improvement, but the foundation of pleasure. Nothing is so opposite to the true enjoyment of life as the relaxed and feeble state of an indolent mind. He who is a stranger to industry may possess, but he can not enjoy. For it is labor only which gives the relish to pleasure. It is the appointed vehicle of every good to man. It is the indispensable condition of our possessing a sound mind in a sound body. Sloth is so inconsistent with both, that it is hard to determine whether it be a greater foe to virtue, or to health and happiness. Inactive as it is in itself, its effects are fatally powerful. Though it appear a slowly flowing stream, yet it undermines all that is stable and flourishing. It not only saps the foundation of every virtue, but pours upon you a deluge of crimes and evils. It is like water,

which first putrefies by stagnation, and then sends up noxious vapors, and fills the atmosphere with death.

Fly therefore from idleness, as the certain parent both of guilt and of ruin. And under idleness I include not mere inaction only, but all that circle of trifling occupations, in which too many saunter away their youth; perpetually engaged in frivolous society or public amusements; in the labors of dress, or the ostentation of their persons.—Is this the foundation which you lay for future usefulness and esteem? By such accomplishments do you hope to recommend yourselves to the thinking part of the world, and to answer the expectations of your friends and your country?—Amusements youth requires. It were vain, it were cruel to prohibit them. But though allowable as the relaxation, they are most culpable as the business, of the young. For they then become the gulf of time and the poison of the mind. They foment bad passions. They weaken the manly powers. They sink the native vigor of youth into contemptible effeminacy.

Redeeming your time from such dangerous waste, seek to fill it with employments which you may review with satisfaction. The acquisition of knowledge is one of the most honorable occupations of youth. The desire of it discovers a liberal mind, and is connected with many accomplishments and many virtues. But though your train of life should not lead you to study, the course of education always furnishes proper employments to a well disposed mind. Whatever you pursue, be emulous to excel. Generous ambition and sensibility to praise are, especially at your age, among the marks of virtue. Think not that any afflu-



ence of fortune, or any elevation of rank, exempt you from the duties of application and industry. Industry is the law of our being ; it is the demand of Nature, of Reason, and of God. Remember always, that the years which now pass over your heads, leave permanent memorials behind them. From your thoughtless minds they may escape ; but they remain in the remembrance of God. They form an important part of the register of your life. They will hereafter bear testimony, either for or against you, at that day, when, for all your actions, but particularly for the employments of youth, you must give an account to God.

Thus I have set before you some of the chief qualifications which belong to that *sober mind*, that virtuous and religious character, which the Apostle in my text recommends to youth ; piety, modesty, truth, benevolence, temperance, and industry. Whether your future course is destined to be long or short, after this manner it should commence ; and, if it continue to be thus conducted, its conclusion, at what time soever it arrives, will not be inglorious or unhappy. For *honorable age is not that which standeth in length of time, or that which is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the gray hair to man, and an unspotted life is old age.*

Let us finish the subject with recalling your attention to that dependence on the blessing of Heaven which, amidst all your endeavors after improvement, you ought continually to preserve. It is too common with the young, even when they resolve to tread the path of virtue and honor, to set out with presumptuous confidence in themselves. Trusting to their own abilities for carrying them successfully through life, they are care-

less of applying to God, or of deriving any assistance from what they are apt to reckon the gloomy discipline of religion. Alas! how little do they know the dangers which await them! Neither human wisdom nor human virtue, unsupported by religion, are equal to the trying situations which often occur in life. By the shock of temptation, how frequently have the most virtuous intentions been overthrown! Under the pressure of disaster, how often has the greatest constancy sunk? *Every good and perfect gift is from above.* Wisdom and virtue, as well as *riches and honor, come from God.* Destitute of his favor, you are in no better situation, with all your boasted abilities, than orphans left to wander in a trackless desert, without any guide to conduct them, or any shelter to cover them from the gathering storm. Correct, then, this ill-founded arrogance. Expect not that your happiness can be independent of Him who made you. By faith and repentance apply to the Redeemer of the world. By piety and prayer seek the protection of the God of heaven. I conclude with the solemn words in which a great prince delivered his dying charge to his son—words which every young person ought to consider as addressed to himself, and to engrave deeply on his heart: *Thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers; and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind. For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

## INNOCENT ENJOYMENT.

WHILE religion condemns such pleasures as are iminoral, it is chargeable with no improper austerity in respect of those which are of an innocent kind. Think not, that by the cautious discipline which it prescribes, it excludes you from all gay enjoyment of life; within the compass of that sedate spirit, to which it forms you, all that is innocently pleasing will be found to lie. It is a mistake to imagine that in constant effusions of giddy mirth, or in that flutter of spirits which is excited by a round of diversions, the chief enjoyment of our state consists. Were this the case, the vain and the frivolous would be on better terms for happiness than the wise, the great, and the good. To arrange the plans of amusement, or to preside in the haunts of jollity, would be more desirable than to exert the highest effort of mental powers for the benefit of nations. A consequence so absurd is sufficient to explode the principle from which it flows. To the amusements and lesser joys of the world religion assigns their proper place. It admits of them, as relaxations from care, as instruments of promoting the union of men, and of enlivening their social intercourse. But though, as long as they are kept within due bounds, it does not censure nor condemn them, neither does it propose them as rewards to the virtuous, or as the principal objects of their pursuit. To such it points out nobler ends of action. Their felicity it engages them to seek in the discharge of a useful, an upright, and honorable, part in life; and, as the habitual tenor of their mind, it promotes cheerfulness and discourages levity.

Between these two there is a wide distinction :

and the mind which is most open to levity is frequently a stranger to cheerfulness. It has been remarked, that transports of intemperate mirth are often no more than flashes from the dark cloud; and that in proportion to the violence of the effulgence, is the succeeding gloom. Levity may be the forced production of folly or vice: cheerfulness is the natural offspring of wisdom and virtue only. The one is an occasional agitation, the other a permanent habit. The one degrades the character, the other is perfectly consistent with the dignity of reason and the steady and manly spirit of religion. To aim at a constant succession of high and vivid sensations of pleasure, is an idea of happiness altogether chimerical. Calm and temperate enjoyment is the utmost that is allotted to man. Beyond this we struggle in vain to raise our state: and, in fact, depress our joys by endeavoring to heighten them. Instead of those fallacious hopes of perpetual festivity, with which the world would allure us, religion confers upon us a cheerful tranquillity. Instead of dazzling us with meteors of joy which sparkle and expire, it sheds around us a calm and steady light. By mixing *trembling* with our joy, it renders that joy more solid, more equal, and more lasting.

In this spirit, then, let us serve God and hold our course through life. Let us approach to the Divine Being as to a sovereign of whom we stand in awe, and to a father in whom we trust. In our conduct let us be cautious and humble, as those who have ground to fear; well pleased and cheerful, as those who have cause to rejoice.—Let us show the world that a religious temper is a temper sedate, not sad; that a religious behaviour is a be-

haviour regulated, not stiff and formal. Thus we shall *use the world as not abusing it* ; we shall pass through its various changes with the least discomposure ; and we shall vindicate religion from the reproaches of those who would attribute to it either enthusiastic joys or slavish terrors. We shall show that it is a rational rule of life, worthy of the perfection of God, and suited to the nature and state of man.

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### HOW TO KEEP THE HEART.

IN the first place, study to acquire the habit of attention to thought. No study is more important ; for, in proportion to the degree in which this habit is possessed, such commonly is the degree of intellectual improvement. It is the power of attention which in a great measure distinguishes the wise and the great from the vulgar and trifling herd of men. The latter are accustomed to think, or rather to dream, without knowing the subject of their thoughts. In their unconnected roving they pursue no end ; they follow no track. Everything floats loose and disjointed on the surface of their mind ; like leaves scattered and blown about on the face of the waters.

In order to lead your thoughts into any useful direction, your first care must be to acquire the power of fixing them, and of restraining their irregular motions. Inure yourself to form a plan of meditation ; to pursue it steadily ; and with severe authority to keep the door shut against intrusions of wandering fancy. Let your mind, for this purpose, become a frequent object to itself. Let

your thoughts be made the subject of thought and review.—‘To what is my attention at present directed? Could I disclose it without a blush to the world? Were God instantly to call me into judgment, what account could I give of it to him? Shall I be the wiser or the better for dwelling on such thoughts as now fill my mind? Are they entirely consistent with my innocence, and with my present and future peace? If they are not, to what purpose do I indulge such unprofitable or dangerous musings?’—By frequent exercise of this inward scrutiny, we might gradually bring imagination under discipline, and turn the powers of thought to their proper use as means of improvement, instead of suffering them to be only the instruments of vanity and guilt.

In the second place, in order to the government of thought, it is necessary to guard against idleness. Idleness is the great fomentor of all corruptions in the human heart. In particular, it is the parent of loose imaginations and inordinate desires. The ever active and restless power of thought, if not employed about what is good, will naturally and unavoidably engender evil. Imagine not that mere occupation, of whatever kind it be, will exempt you from the blame and danger of an idle life. Perhaps the worst species of idleness is a dissipated though seemingly busy life, spent in the haunts of loose society, and in the chase of perpetual amusement. Hence, a giddy mind, alternately elated and dejected with trifles, occupied with no recollection of the past but what is fruitless, and with no plans for the future but what are either frivolous or guilty.

As, therefore, you would govern your thoughts, or, indeed, as you would have any thoughts that

are worthy of being governed, provide honorable employment for the native activity of your minds. Keep knowledge, virtue, and usefulness, ever in view. Let your life proceed in a train of such pursuits as are worthy of a Christian, of a rational and social being. While these are regularly carried on as the main business of life, let amusement possess no more than its proper place in the distribution of your time. Take particular care that your amusements be of an irreproachable kind, and that all your society be either improving or innocent. So shall the stream of your thoughts be made to run in a pure channel.

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## CHRISTIAN INTERCOURSE.

THERE is a generosity in Christian intercourse, the very reverse of that little and narrowing spirit ascribed to it by those who do not know, or do not love it. It can not be otherwise for are not those who cultivate it ever the followers of Him, whose sublime characteristic it was—‘that he pleased not himself?’

In the society of Christians, every man does not so much look on his own things as on the things of others. Christians do not make conversation a theatre for dispute or display. They consider it as a reciprocation of benignity; a desire to draw out the talents of those who, with more merit, have less pretension. An interchange of sentiment between intellectual and highly principled persons confers both pleasure and benefit. To make it at once pleasant and profitable, there must be an accordance of principle, if not of opinion

The conversation will frequently have a tincture of religion, even when the topic under discussion is not religious. Topics barely secular are susceptible of this spirit; and in pious and discreet hands, they will be treated in a way to promote religion without professing it.

True religion keeps the whole man in order, whether he be engaged in business or in company. It sheds its benign influence far beyond its own sphere, and by a reflex light casts a ray on actions or speculations to which it has no immediate reference. The Christian does not go out of his way in search of wit, or embellishment, though he does not refuse them when they naturally present themselves, when they grow out of the subject, and the story is not invented for their forced introduction, nor any sacrifice made of something better than themselves. The Christian uses his talents temperately, seeks not to eclipse the less brilliant; and had much rather not shine at all, than shine at the expense of another. The religious man in society finds means for the exercise of many Christian virtues without descanting on them,—candor, charitable construction, patience with the less enlightened, and temper with the less forbearing, a scrupulous veracity, an inviolable sincerity, a watchful guard against every vain thought and every light expression. He is careful to preserve wit unsullied, gaiety pure, and vivacity correct. He is constantly on the watch to introduce subjects of a higher strain; when the occasion offers, he gladly embraces it, but with a due regard to time, place, and circumstance. Let it be observed, we are not here speaking of select society, associating for religious improvement, but



of the duty of keeping ordinary conversation within the bounds and under the discipline of correct principle.

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## ON FRIENDSHIP.

*The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* 1 Samuel, xviii. 1. Such friendships certainly are not unreal; and for the honor of human nature, it is to be hoped, are not altogether unfrequent among mankind. Happy it is when they take root in our early years, and are engrafted on the ingenuous sensibility of youth. Friendships then contracted retain to the last a tenderness and warmth seldom possessed by friendships that are formed in the riper periods of life. The remembrance of ancient and youthful connexions melts every human heart; and the dissolution of them is, perhaps, the most painful feeling to which we are exposed here below.—But at whatever period of life friendships are formed, as long as they continue sincere and affectionate, they form, undoubtedly, one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy. By the pleasing communication of all our sentiments which they prompt, they are justly said to double our pleasures and divide our sorrows. They give a brighter sunshine to the gay incidents of life; and they enlighten the gloom of its darker hours. *A faithful friend*, it is justly and beautifully said by one of the Apocryphal writers, *is the medicine of life*. Ecclesiasticus, vi. 16. A variety of occasions happen, when to pour forth the heart to one whom we love and trust, is the chief comfort, perhaps the only relief, we can enjoy. Misera-

ble is he who, shut up within the narrow inclosure of selfish interest, has no person to whom he can at all times with full confidence expand his soul.

PERFECTION NOT TO BE EXPECTED IN OUR FRIENDS.

Let me advise you not to expect perfection in any with whom you contract friendship. It holds in general with respect to all worldly pursuits, that the more moderate our expectations are, they are likely to be the more successful. If in any situation of life we hope to possess complete happiness, we may depend on receiving mortifications. If in any person we trust to find nothing but perfection, we may be assured that, on longer acquaintance, we shall meet with disappointments. In the case of friendship, this admonition is the more necessary to be given, as a certain warmth and enthusiasm belong to it which are apt to carry us beyond the bounds of nature. In young minds especially, a disposition of this kind is often found to take place. They form to themselves romantic ideas, gathered perhaps from fictitious histories of the high and heroic qualities which belong to human nature. All those qualities they ascribe, without reserve or limitation, to the person with whom they wish to enter into intimate friendship; and on the least failure appearing, alienation instantly follows. Hence many a friendship, hastily, perhaps, contracted, is as hastily dissolved; and disgust succeeds to violent attachment. Remember, my friends, that a faultless character on earth is a mere chimaera. Many failings you experience in yourselves. Be not surprised when you discover the like in others, of whom you had formed the highest opinion. The best and most estimable persons are

they in whom the fewest material defects are found ; and whose great and solid qualities counterbalance the common infirmities of men. It is to these qualities you are to look in forming friendships ; to good sense and prudence, which constitute the basis of every respectable character ; to virtue, to good temper, to steadiness of affection ; and according to the union of those dispositions, esteem yourselves happy in the friend whom you choose.

DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WILL ARISE AMONG  
FRIENDS.

I must also admonish you not to be hurt by differences of opinion arising in intercourse with your friends. It is impossible for these not to occur. Perhaps no two persons were ever cast so exactly in the same mould as to think always in the same manner on every subject. It was wisely contrived by Providence, that diversity of sentiment should take place among men ; on purpose to exercise our faculties, and to give variety to human life. Perpetual uniformity of thought would become monotonous and insipid.—When it is with regard to trifles that diversity or contrariety of opinion shows itself, it is childish in the last degree if this become the ground of estranged affection. When from such a cause there arises any breach of friendship, human weakness is then discovered in a mortifying light. In matters of serious moment, the sentiments of the best and worthiest may vary from those of their friends ; according as their lines of life diverge, or as their temper and habits of thought present objects under different points of view. But, among candid and liberal minds, unity of affection will still be preserved. No man

has any title to erect his own opinions into a universal and infallible standard; and the more enlarged that any man's mind is, the more readily he will overlook differences in sentiments; as long as he is persuaded that the mind of his friend is upright, and that he follows the dictates of conscience and integrity.

#### FRIENDS SHOULD BE OPEN AND FRANK.

It is material to the preservation of friendship, that openness of temper and manners on both hands be cultivated. Nothing more certainly dissolves friendship than the jealousy which arises from darkness and concealment. If your situation oblige you to take a different side from your friend, do it openly. Avow your conduct; avow your motives; as far as honor allows, disclose yourselves frankly; seek no cover from unnecessary and mysterious secrecy. Mutual confidence is the soul of friendship. As soon as that is destroyed, or even impaired, it is only a show of friendship that remains. What was once cordial intimacy degenerates first into formal civility. Constraint on both sides next succeeds; and disgust or hatred soon follows. The maxim that has been laid down by certain crooked politicians, to behave to a friend with the same guarded caution as we would to an enemy, because it is possible that he may one day become such, discovers a mind which never was made for the enjoyments of friendship. It is a maxim which, not unreasonably I admit, may find place in those political and party friendships of which I before spoke; where personal advancement is always in view. But it is altogether

inconsistent with the spirit of those friendships which are formed, and understood to be nourished, by the heart.

FRIENDSHIP SHOULD CULTIVATE GENTLE AND  
OBLIGING MANNERS.

Cultivate, in all intercourse among friends, gentle and obliging manners. It is a common error to suppose, that familiar intimacy supersedes attention to the lesser duties of behaviour; and that, under the notion of freedom, it may excuse a careless, or even a rough demeanor. On the contrary, an intimate connexion can only be kept up by a constant wish to be pleasing and agreeable. The nearer and closer that men are brought together, the more frequent that the points of contact between them become, there is the greater necessity for the surface being smooth, and everything being removed that can grate or offend.—Let no harshness, no appearance of neglect, no supercilious affectation of superiority, occur in the intercourse of friends. A tart reply, a proneness to rebuke, a captious and contradictory spirit, are often known to embitter domestic life, and to set friends at variance. In those smaller articles of behaviour where men are too apt to be careless, and to indulge their humor without restraint; the real character is often understood to break forth and show itself. It is by no means enough, that in all matters of serious interest we think ourselves ready to prove the sincerity of our friendship. These occur more rarely. The ordinary tenor of life is composed of small duties and offices, which men have occasion daily to perform; and it

is only by rendering daily behaviour agreeable, that we can long preserve the comforts of friendship.

#### EVIL REPORTS OF FRIENDS.

Let me caution you not to listen rashly to evil reports against your friends. When upon proper grounds you have formed a connexion, be slow of believing anything against the friend whom you have chosen. Remember that there is among mankind a spirit of malignity, which too often takes pleasure in disturbing the society of those who appear to enjoy one another. The Scripture hath warned us that there is *a whisperer who separateth chief friends; there is a false witness who soweth discord among brethren*. Give not therefore a ready ear to the officious insinuations of those who, under the guise of friendly concern, come to admonish you that you ought to stand upon your guard against those whom they see you disposed to trust. Consider whether, under this fair appearance, there may not lurk some secret envy and rivalry or some concealed interest. Chase not every flying report. Suffer not the poison of jealousy easily to taint your mind and break your peace. A wide difference there is between that weak credulity which allows itself to be imposed upon blindly, and that dark and suspicious spirit which is always inclined to the evil side. It forms part of the character of a wise and good man, that he is not prone to *take up a reproach against his neighbor*.

#### FRIENDS IN ADVERSITY.

Let me exhort you not to desert your friend in danger or distress. Too many there are in the

world, whose attachment to those they call their friends is confined to the day of their prosperity. As long as that continues, they are, or appear to be, affectionate and cordial. But as soon as their friend is under a cloud, they begin to withdraw and to separate their interest from his. In friendships of this sort, the heart most assuredly has never had much concern. For the great test of true friendship is constancy in the hour of danger, adherence in the season of distress.—When your friend is calumniated, then is the time openly and boldly to espouse his cause. When his situation is changed, or his fortunes are falling, then is the time of affording prompt and zealous aid. When sickness or infirmity occasions him to be neglected by others, that is the opportunity which every real friend will seize of redoubling all the affectionate attentions which love suggests. These are the important duties, the sacred claims of friendship, which religion and virtue enforce on every worthy mind.—To show yourselves warm, after this manner, in the cause of your friend, commands esteem; even from those who have personal interest in opposing him. This honorable zeal of friendship has in every age attracted the veneration of mankind. It has consecrated to the latest posterity the names of those who have given up their fortunes, and have espoused their lives in behalf of the friends whom they loved; while ignorance and disgrace have ever been the portion of them who deserted their friends in the evil day: *Thine own friend forsake not.*

## ON THE QUALITIES AND ACQUIREMENTS WHICH CONSTITUTE A WELL-REGULATED MIND.

WE propose to take a slight review of what those qualities are which constitute a well-regulated mind, and which ought to be aimed at by those who desire either their own mental culture, or that of others who are under their care. The more important considerations may be briefly recapitulated in the following manner :

### HABIT OF ATTENTION.

I. The cultivation of a habit of steady and continuous attention; or of properly directing the mind to any subject which is before it, so as fully to contemplate its elements and relations. This is necessary for the due exercise of every other mental process, and is the foundation of all improvement of character, both intellectual and moral. We shall afterward have occasion to remark, how often sophistical opinions and various distortions of character may be traced to errors in this first act of the mind, or to a misdirection and want of due regulation of the attention. There is, indeed, every reason to believe that the diversities in the power of judging, in different individuals, are much less than we are apt to imagine, and that the remarkable differences observed in the act of judging are rather to be ascribed to the manner in which the mind is previously directed to the fact on which the judgment is afterwards to be exercised. It is related of Sir Isaac Newton that when he was questioned respecting the mental qualities which formed the peculiarity of his char-



acter, he referred it entirely to the power which he had acquired of continuous attention.

#### REGULATION OF THE THOUGHTS.

II. Nearly connected with the former, and of equal importance, is a careful regulation and control of the succession of our thoughts. This remarkable faculty is very much under the influence of cultivation, and on the power so acquired depends the important habit of regular and connected thinking. It is primarily a voluntary act; and in the exercise of it in different individuals there are the most remarkable differences. In some the thoughts are allowed to wander at large without any regulation, or are devoted only to frivolous and transient objects; while others habitually exercise over them a stern control, directing them to subjects of real importance, and prosecuting these in a regular and connected manner. This important habit gains strength by exercise, and nothing, certainly, has a greater influence in giving tone and consistency to the whole character. It may not, indeed, be going too far to assert that our condition, in the scale both of moral and intellectual beings, is in a great measure determined by the control which we have acquired over the succession of our thoughts, and by the subjects on which they are habitually exercised.

The regulation of the thoughts is, therefore, a high concern: in the man who devotes his attention to it as a study of supreme importance, the first great source of astonishment will be the manner in which his thoughts have been occupied in many an hour and many a day that has passed over him. The leading objects to which the

thoughts may be directed are referrible to three classes. (1.) The ordinary engagements of life, or matters of business, with which every man is occupied in one degree or another ; including concerns of domestic arrangement, personal comfort, and necessary recreation. Each of these deserves a certain degree of attention, but this requires to be strictly guarded by its real and relative importance ; and it is entirely unworthy of a sound and regulated mind to have the attention solely or chiefly occupied with matters of personal comfort, or of trivial importance, calculated merely to afford amusement for the passing hour. (2.) Visions of the imagination built up by the mind itself when it has nothing better to occupy it. The mind can not be idle, and when it is not occupied by subjects of a useful kind, it will find a resource in those which are frivolous or hurtful,—in mere visions, waking dreams, or fictions, in which the mind wanders from scene to scene, unrestrained by reason, probability, or truth. No habit can be more opposed to a healthy condition of the mental powers ; and none ought to be more carefully guarded against by every one who would cultivate the high acquirement of a well-regulated mind. (3.) Entirely opposed to the latter of these modes, and distinct also in a great measure from the former, is the habit of following out a connected chain of thoughts on subjects of importance and of truth, whenever the mind is disengaged from the proper and necessary attention to the ordinary transactions of life. The particular subjects to which the thoughts are directed in cultivating this habit, will vary in different individuals ; but the consideration of the relative value of them does not belong to our present subject. The purpose of these ob-

servations is simply to impress the value of that regulation of the thoughts by which they can always find an occupation of interest and importance distinct from the ordinary transactions of life, or the mere pursuit of frivolous engagements; and also totally distinct from that destructive habit by which the mind is allowed to run to waste amid visions and fictions unworthy of a waking man.

#### MENTAL ACTIVITY.

III. The cultivation of an active inquiring state of mind which seeks for information from every source that comes within its reach, whether in reading, conversation, or personal observation. With this state of mental activity ought to be closely connected attention to the authenticity of facts so received; avoiding the two extremes of credulity and scepticism.

#### ASSOCIATION AND REFLECTION.

IV. The habit of correct association; that is, connecting facts in the mind according to their true relations, and to the manner in which they tend to illustrate each other. This, as we have formerly seen, is one of the principal means of improving the memory; particularly of the kind of memory which is an essential quality of a cultivated mind; namely, that which is founded not upon incidental connexions, but on true and important relations. Nearly allied to this is the habit of reflection, or of tracing carefully the relations of facts, and the conclusions and principles which arise out of them. It is in this manner, as was formerly mentioned, that the philosophical mind

often traces remarkable relations, and deduces important conclusions ; while to the common understanding the facts appear to be very remote or entirely unconnected.

#### PROPER SELECTION OF OBJECTS OF PURSUIT.

V. A careful selection of the subjects to which the mind ought to be directed. These are, in some respects, different in different persons, according to their situations in life ; but there are certain objects of attention which are peculiarly adapted to each individual, and there are some which are equally interesting to all. In regard to the latter, an appropriate degree of attention is the part of every wise man ; in regard to the former, a proper selection is the foundation of excellence. One individual may waste his powers in that desultory application of them which leads to an imperfect acquaintance with a variety of subjects ; while another allows his life to steal over him in listless inactivity, or application to trifling pursuits. It is equally melancholy to see high powers devoted to unworthy objects ; such as the contests of party on matters involving no important principle, or the subtleties of sophistical controversy. For rising to eminence in any intellectual pursuit, there is not a rule of more essential importance than that of doing one thing at a time ; avoiding distracting and desultory occupations ; and keeping a leading object habitually before the mind, as one in which it can at all times find an interesting resource when necessary avocations allow the thoughts to recur to it. A subject which is cultivated in this manner, not by regular periods of study merely, but as an habitual object of thought, rises up and

expands before the mind in a manner which is altogether astonishing. If along with this habit there be cultivated the practice of constantly writing such views as arise, we perhaps describe that state of mental discipline by which talents of a very moderate order may be applied in a conspicuous and useful manner to any subject to which they are devoted. Such writing need not be made at first with any great attention to method, but merely put aside for future consideration; and in this manner the different departments of a subject will develop and arrange themselves as they advance, in a manner equally pleasing and wonderful.

#### GOVERNMENT OF THE IMAGINATION.

VI. A due regulation and proper control of the imagination; that is, restricting its range to objects which harmonize with truth, and are adapted to the real state of things with which the individual is or may be connected. We have seen how much the character is influenced by this exercise of the mind; that it may be turned to purposes of the greatest moment, both in the pursuits of science and in the cultivation of benevolence and virtue; but that, on the other hand, it may be so employed as to debase both the moral and intellectual character.

#### CULTURE AND REGULATION OF THE JUDGMENT.

VII. The cultivation of calm and correct judgment—applicable alike to the formation of opinions, and the regulation of conduct. This is founded, as we have seen, upon the habit of directing

the attention distinctly and steadily to all the facts and considerations bearing upon a subject ; and it consists in contemplating them in their true relations, and assigning to each the degree of importance of which it is worthy. This mental habit tends to guard us against forming conclusions, either with listless inattention to the views by which we ought to be influenced,—or with attention directed to some of these, while we neglect others of equal or greater importance. It is, therefore, opposed to the influence of prejudice and passion,—to the formation of sophistical opinions,—to party spirit,—and to every propensity which leads to the adoption of principles on any other ground than calm and candid examination, guided by a sincere desire to discover the truth. In the purely physical sciences, distorted opinions are seldom met with, or make little impression, because they are brought to the test of experiment, and thus their fallacy is exposed. But it is otherwise in those departments which do not admit of this remedy. Sophisms and partial inductions are, accordingly, met with in medicine, political economy, and metaphysics ; and too often in the still higher subjects of morals and religion. In the economy of the human mind, it is indeed impossible to observe a more remarkable phenomenon than the manner in which a man who, in the ordinary affairs of life, shows the general characters of a sound understanding, can thus resign himself to the influence of an opinion founded upon partial examination. He brings ingeniously to the support of his dogma, every fact and argument that can possibly be turned to its defence ; and explains away or overlooks everything that tends to a different conclusion ; while he appears anxious

to convince others, and really seems to have persuaded himself, that he is engaged in an honest investigation of truth. This propensity gains strength by indulgence, and the mind, which has yielded to its influence, advances from one pretended discovery to another,—mistaking its own fancies for the sound conclusions of the understanding, until it either settles down into some monstrous sophism, or perhaps concludes by doubting of everything.

The manner in which the most extravagant opinions are maintained by persons who give way to this abuse of their powers of reasoning, is scarcely more remarkable than the facility with which they often find zealous proselytes. It is, indeed, difficult to trace the principles by which various individuals are influenced in thus surrendering their assent, with little examination, often on subjects of the highest importance. In some it would appear to arise from the mere pleasure of mental excitement; in others, from the love of singularity, and the desire of appearing wiser than their neighbors; while, in not a few, the will evidently takes the lead in the mental process, and opinions are seized upon with avidity, and embraced as truths, which recommend themselves to previously existing inclinations of the heart. But whatever may be the explanation, the influence of the principle is most extensive; and sentiments of the most opposite kinds may often be traced to the facility with which the human mind receives opinions which have been presented to it by some extrinsic influence. This influence may be of various kinds. It may be the power of party, or the persuasion of a plausible and persevering individual: it may be the supposed infallibility of

a particular system ; it may be the mere empire of fashion, or the pretensions of a false philosophy. The particular result, also, may differ, according as one or other of these causes may be in operation. But the intellectual condition is the same ; and the distortion of character which arises out of it, whether bigotry, superstition, or scepticism, may be traced to a similar process ; namely, to an influence which directs the mind upon some other principle than a candid investigation of truth. In a similar manner we may perhaps account for the facts, that the lowest superstition and the most daring scepticism frequently pass into each other ; and that the most remarkable examples of both are often met with in the same situations, namely, those in which the human mind is restrained from free and candid inquiry. On the other hand, it would appear that the universal toleration, and full liberty of conscience, which characterize a free and enlightened country, are calculated to preserve from the two extremes of superstition and scepticism. In other situations, it is striking to remark how often those who revolt from the errors of a false faith take refuge in infidelity.

The mental qualities which have been referred to in the preceding observations, constituting an active, attentive, and reflecting mind, should be carefully cultivated by all who desire their own mental improvement. The man who has cultivated them with adequate care habitually exercises a process of mind which is equally a source of improvement and of refined enjoyment. Does a subject occur to him, either in conversation or reflection, in which he feels that his knowledge is deficient, he commences, without delay, an eager pursuit of the necessary information. In prose-



cuting any inquiry, whether by reading or observation, his attention is acutely alive to the authenticity of facts,—the validity of arguments,—the accuracy of processes of investigation,—principles which are illustrated by the facts and conclusions deduced from them,—the character of observers,—style of writers; and thus, all the circumstances which come before him are made acutely and individually the objects of attention and reflection. Such a man acquires a confidence in his own powers and resources to which those are strangers who have not cultivated this kind of mental discipline. The intellectual condition arising out of it is applicable alike to every situation in which a man can be placed,—whether the affairs of ordinary life,—the pursuits of science,—or those higher inquiries and relations which concern him as a moral being.

In the affairs of ordinary life, this mental habit constitutes what we call an intelligent, thinking man, whose attention is alive to all that is passing before him,—who thinks acutely and eagerly on his own conduct and that of others,—and is constantly deriving useful information and subjects of reflection from occurrences which, by the listless mind, are passed by and forgotten. This habit is not necessarily connected with acquired knowledge, or with what is commonly called intellectual cultivation; but is often met with, in a high degree, in persons whose direct attainments are of a very limited kind. It is the foundation of caution and prudence in the affairs of life, and may perhaps be considered as the basis of that quality, of more value to its possessor than any of the sciences, which is commonly called sound good sense. It is the origin also of what we call presence of

mind,—or a readiness in adapting resources to circumstances. A man of this character, in whatever emergency he happens to be placed, forms a prompt, clear, and defined judgment of whatever conduct or expedient the situation requires, and acts with promptitude upon his decision. In both these respects, he differs equally from the listless inactivity of one description of men, and the rash, hasty, and inconsiderate conduct of another. He differs not less from characters of a third class, who, though they may be correct in their judgment of what ought to be done, arrive at their decision, or act upon it, too slowly for the circumstances, and consequently are said, according to a common proverb, to be wise behind time. The listless and torpid character, indeed, may occasionally be excited by emergencies to a degree of mental activity which is not natural to him, and this is, in many instances, the source of a readiness of conception, and a promptitude in action which the individual does not exhibit in ordinary circumstances.

In the pursuits of science, these mental qualities constitute observing and inventive genius,—two conditions of mind which lie at the foundation of all philosophical eminence. By *observing genius*, I mean that habit of mind by which the philosopher not only acquires truths relating to any subject, but arranges and generalizes them in such a manner as to know how they yield conclusions which escape the mere collector of facts. He likewise analyzes phenomena, and thus traces important relations among facts which, to the common mind, appear very remote and dissimilar. I have formerly illustrated this by the manner in which Newton traced a relation between the fall

of an apple from a tree, and those great principles which regulate the movements of the heavenly bodies. By *inventive genius*, again, I mean that active, inquiring state of mind, which not only deduces, in this manner, principles from facts when they are before it, but which grasps after principles by eager anticipation, and then makes its own conjectures the guides to observation or experiment. This habit of mind is peculiarly adapted to the experimental sciences; and in these, indeed, it may be considered as the source of the most important discoveries. It leads a man not only to observe and connect the facts, but to go in search of them, and to draw them, as it were, out of that concealment in which they escape the ordinary observer. In doing so, he takes for his guides certain conjectures or assumptions which have arisen out of his own intense contemplation of the subject. These may be as often false as true; but if found false, they are instantly abandoned; and by such a course of active inquiry, he at length arrives at the development of truth. From him are to be expected discoveries which elude the observation, not of the vulgar alone, but even of the philosopher, who, without cultivating this habit of invention, is satisfied with tracing the relation of facts as they happen to be brought before him by the slower course of testimony or occasional observation. The man who only amuses himself with conjectures, and rests satisfied in them without proof, is the mere visionary or speculatist, who injures every subject to which his speculations are directed.

In the concerns which relate to man as a moral being, this active, inquiring, and reflecting habit of mind is not less applicable than in matters of

minor interest. The man who cultivates it, directs his attention intensely and eagerly to the great truths which belong to his moral condition,—seeks to estimate distinctly his relation to them, and to feel their influence upon his moral principles. This constitutes the distinction between the individual who merely professes a particular creed, and him who examines it till he makes it a matter of understanding and conviction, and then takes its principles as the rule of his emotions and the guide of his conduct. Such a man also contemplates in the same manner his relations to other men; questions himself rigidly regarding the duties which belong to his situation, and his own observance of them. He contemplates others with a kind of personal interest, enters into their wants and feelings, and participates in their distresses. In all his relations, whether of justice, benevolence, or friendship, he acts not from mere incidental impulse, but upon clear and steady principles. In this course of action many may go along with him, when the requirements of the individual case are pointed out and impressed upon them; but that in which the mass of mankind are wanting, is the state of mental activity which eagerly contemplates its various duties and relations, and thus finds its way to the line of conduct appropriate to the importance of each of them.

#### RIGHT CONDITION OF THE MORAL FEELINGS.

VIII. For a well-regulated understanding, and particularly for the application of it to inquiries of the highest import, there is indispensably necessary a sound condition of the moral feelings. This important subject belongs properly to another de-

partment of mental science ; but we have seen its extensive influence on the due exercise of the intellectual powers ;—and it is impossible to lose sight of the place which it holds in the general harmony of the mental functions required for constituting that condition, of greater value than any earthly good, which is strictly to be called a well-regulated mind. This high attainment consists not in any cultivation, however great, of the intellectual powers ; but requires also a corresponding and harmonious culture of the benevolent affections and moral feelings ; a due regulation of the passions, emotions, and desires ; and a full recognizance of the supreme authority of conscience over the whole intellectual and moral system. Cold and contracted, indeed, is that view of man which regards his understanding alone ; and barren is that system, however wide its range, which rests in the mere attainment of truth. The highest state of man consists in his purity as a moral being ; and in the habitual culture and full operation of those principles by which he looks forth to other scenes and other times. Among these are desires and longings which naught in earthly science can satisfy ; which soar beyond the sphere of sensible things, and find no object worthy of their capacities, until, in humble adoration, they rest in the contemplation of God. Truths then burst upon the mind which seem to rise before it in a progressive series, each presenting characters of new and mightier import. The most aspiring understanding, awed by the view, feels the inadequacy of its utmost powers ; yet the mind of the humble inquirer gains strength as it advances. There is now felt, in a peculiar manner, the influence of that healthy condition of the moral feelings which leads a man not

to be afraid of the truth. For, on this subject, we are never to lose sight of the remarkable principle of our nature formerly referred to, by which a man comes to reason himself into the belief of, what he wishes to be true; and shuts his mind against, or even arrives at an actual disbelief of truths which he fears to encounter. It is striking, also, to remark, how closely the philosophy of human nature harmonizes with the declarations of the sacred writings; where this condition of mind is traced to its true source, in the corruption of the moral feelings, and is likewise shown to involve a high degree of guilt, in that rejection of truth which is its natural consequence: 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.'

This condition of mind presents a subject of intense interest to every one who would study his own mental condition, either as an intellectual or a moral being. In each individual instance, it may be traced to a particular course of thought and of conduct, by which the mind went gradually more and more astray from truth and from virtue. In this progress, each single step was felt to be a voluntary act; but the influence of the whole, after a certain period, is to distort the judgment, and deaden the moral feelings on the great questions of truth and rectitude. Of this remarkable phenomenon in the economy of man, the explanation is beyond the reach of our faculties; but the facts are unquestionable, and the practical lesson to be

derived from them is of deep and serious import. The first volition by which the mind consciously wanders from truth, or the moral feelings go astray from virtue, may impart a morbid influence which shall perpetuate itself, and gain strength in future volitions, until the result shall be to poison the whole intellectual and moral system. Thus, in the wondrous scheme of sequences which has been established in the economy of the human heart, one volition may impart a character to the future man,—the first downward step may be fatal.

Every candid observer of human nature must feel this statement to be consistent with truth; and, by a simple and legitimate step of reasoning, a principle of the greatest interest seems to arise out of it. When this loss of harmony among the mental faculties has attained a certain degree, we do not perceive any power in the mind itself capable of correcting the disorder which has been introduced into the moral system. Either, therefore, the evil is irremediable and hopeless, or we must look for an influence from without the mind, which may afford an adequate remedy. We are thus led to discover the adaptation and the probability of the provisions of the Christian revelation, where an influence is indeed disclosed to us, capable of restoring the harmony which has been destroyed, and of raising man anew to the sound and healthy condition of a moral being. We can not perceive any improbability, that the Being who originally framed the wondrous fabric, may thus hold intercourse with it, and provide a remedy for its moral disorders; and thus a statement, such as human reason never could have anticipated, comes to us invested with every element of credibility and of truth.

The sound exercise of the understanding, therefore, is closely connected with the important habit of looking within; or of rigidly investigating our intellectual and moral condition. This leads us to inquire what opinions we have formed, and upon what grounds we have formed them;—what have been our leading pursuits;—whether these have been guided by a sound consideration of their real value,—or whether important objects of attention have been lightly passed over, or entirely neglected. It leads us further to contemplate our moral condition,—our desires, attachments, and antipathies; the government of the imagination, and the regimen of the heart; what is the habitual current of our thoughts; and whether we exercise over them that control which indicates alike intellectual vigor and moral purity. It leads us to review our conduct, with its principles and motives, and to compare the whole with the great standards of truth and rectitude. This investigation is the part of every wise man. Without it, an individual may make the greatest attainments in science, may learn to measure the earth, and to trace the course of the stars, while he is entirely wanting in that higher department,—the knowledge of himself.

On these important subjects, I would more particularly address myself to that interesting class for whom this work is chiefly intended, the younger members of the medical profession. The considerations which have been submitted to them, while they appear to carry the authority of truth, are applicable at once to their scientific investigations, and to those great inquiries, equally interesting to men of every degree, which relate to the principles of moral and religious belief. On these sub-



jects, a sound condition of mind will lead them to think and judge for themselves with a care and seriousness adapted to the solemn import of the inquiry, and without being influenced by the dogmas of those who, with little examination, presume to decide with confidence on matters of eternal moment. Of the modifications of that distortion of character which has commonly received the name of cant, the cant of hypocrisy has been said to be the worst; but there is another which may fairly be placed by its side, and that is the cant of infidelity,—the affectation of scoffing at sacred things by men who have never examined the subject, or never with an attention in any degree adequate to its momentous importance. A well-regulated mind must at once perceive that this is alike unworthy of sound sense and sound philosophy. If we require the authority of names, we need only to be reminded, that truths which received the cordial assent of Boyle and Newton, of Haller and Boerhaave, are at least deserving of grave and deliberate examination. But we may dismiss such an appeal as this; for nothing more is wanted to challenge the utmost seriousness of every candid inquirer than the solemn nature of the inquiry itself. The medical observer, in an especial manner, has facts at all times before him which are in the highest degree calculated to fix his deep and serious attention. In the structure and economy of the human body he has proofs, such as no other branch of natural science can furnish, of the power and wisdom of the Eternal One. Let him resign his mind to the influence of these proofs, and learn to rise in humble adoration to the Almighty Being of whom they witness; and, familiar as he is with human suffering and death, let him learn

to estimate the value of those truths which have power to heal the broken heart, and to cheer the bed of death with the prospect of immortality.

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### TRUE SENSIBILITY.

FROM true sensibility flow a thousand good offices, apparently small in themselves, but of high importance to the felicity of others; offices which altogether escape the observation of the cold and unfeeling, who, by the hardness of their manner render themselves unamiable, even when they mean to do good. How happy then would it be for mankind if this affectionate disposition prevailed more generally in the world! How much would the sum of public virtue and public felicity be increased, if men were always inclined to *rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep!*

But, besides the effect of such a temper on general virtue and happiness, let us consider its effect on the happiness of him who possesses it, and the various pleasures to which it gives him access. If he be master of riches or influence, it affords him the means of increasing his own enjoyment, by relieving the wants, or increasing the comforts of others. If he command not these advantages, yet all the comforts which he sees in the possession of the deserving, become in some sort his, by his rejoicing in the good which they enjoy. Even the face of nature yields a satisfaction to him which the insensible can never know. The profusion of goodness which he beholds poured forth on the universe dilates his heart with the

thought that innumerable multitudes around him are blessed and happy. When he sees the labors of men appearing to prosper, and views a country flourishing in wealth and industry ; when he beholds the spring coming forth in its beauty, and reviving the decayed face of nature ; or in autumn beholds the fields loaded with plenty, and the year crowned with all its fruits ; he lifts his affections with gratitude to the great Father of all, and rejoices in the general felicity and joy.

It may indeed be objected, that the same sensibility lays open the heart to be pierced with many wounds from the distresses which abound in the world ; exposes us to frequent suffering from the participation which it communicates of the sorrows as well as of the joys of friendship. But let it be considered, that the tender melancholy of sympathy is accompanied with a sensation, which they who feel it would not exchange for the gratifications of the selfish. When the heart is strongly moved by any of the kind affections, even when it pours itself forth in virtuous sorrow, a secret attractive charm mingles with the painful emotion ; there is a joy in the midst of grief. Let it be farther considered, that the griefs which sensibility introduces are counterbalanced by pleasures which flow from the same source. Sensibility heightens in general the human powers, and is connected with acuteness in all our feelings. If it makes us more alive to some painful sensations, in return it renders the pleasing ones more vivid and animated. The selfish man languishes in his narrow circle of pleasures. They are confined to what affects his own interest. He is obliged to repeat the same gratifications till they become insipid. But the man of virtuous sensibility moves in a wider

sphere of felicity. His powers are much more frequently called forth into occupations of pleasing activity. Numberless occasions open to him of indulging his favorite taste, by conveying satisfaction to others. Often it is in his power, in one way or other, to soothe the afflicted heart, to carry some consolation into the house of woe. In the scenes of ordinary life, in the domestic and social intercourses of men, the cordiality of his affections cheers and gladdens him. Every appearance, every description of innocent happiness is enjoyed by him. Every native expression of kindness and affection among others, is felt by him, even though he be not the object of it. Among a circle of friends enjoying one another, he is as happy as the happiest. In a word, he lives in a different sort of world from what the selfish man inhabits. He possesses a new sense, which enables him to behold objects which the selfish can not see. At the same time, his enjoyments are not of that kind which remain merely on the surface of the mind. They penetrate the heart. They enlarge and elevate, they refine and ennoble it. To all the pleasing emotions of affection, they add the dignified consciousness of virtue.—Children of men ! Men formed by nature to live and to feel as brethren ! How long will ye continue to estrange yourselves from one another by competitions and jealousies, when in cordial union ye might be so much more blest ? How long will ye seek your happiness in selfish gratifications alone, neglecting those purer and better sources of joy, which flow from the affections and the heart.

## FALSE SENSIBILITY.

IN modern times, the chief improvement of which we have to boast is a sense of humanity. This, notwithstanding the selfishness that still prevails, is the favorite and distinguishing virtue of the age. On general manners, and on several departments of society, it has had considerable influence: it has abated the spirit of persecution; it has even tempered the horrors of war; and man is now more ashamed than he was in former ages of acting as a savage to men. Hence, sensibility is become so reputable a quality, that the appearance of it is frequently assumed when the reality is wanting. Softness of manners must not be mistaken for true sensibility. Sensibility indeed tends to produce gentleness in behaviour; and when such behaviour flows from native affection, it is valuable and amiable. But the exterior manner alone may be learned in the school of the world; and often, too often, is found to cover much unfeeling hardness of heart. Professions of sensibility on every trifling occasion, joined with the appearance of excessive softness, and a profusion of sentimental language, afford always much ground for distrust. They create the suspicion of a studied character. Frequently, under a negligent and seemingly rough manner, there lies a tender and feeling heart. Manliness and sensibility are so far from being incompatible, that the truly brave are for the most part generous and humane; while the soft and effeminate are hardly capable of any vigorous exertion of affection.

As sensibility supposes delicacy of feeling with respect to others, they who affect the highest sensibility are apt to carry this delicacy to excess.

They are perhaps not incapable of the warmth of disinterested friendship; but they are become so refined in all their sensations; they entertain such high notions of what ought to correspond in the feelings of others to their own; they are so mightily hurt by everything which comes not up to their ideal standard of reciprocal affection, as to produce disquiet and uneasiness to all with whom they are connected. Hence, unjust suspicions of their friends; hence, groundless upbraidings and complaints of unkindness; hence, a proneness to take violent offence at trifles. In consequence of examining their friends with a microscopic eye, what to an ordinary observer would not be displeasing to them is grating and disgusting. At the bottom of the character of such persons there always lie much pride and attention to themselves. This is indeed a false species of sensibility. It is the substitution of a capricious and irritable delicacy, in the room of that plain and native tenderness of heart, which prompts men to view others with an indulgent eye, and to make great allowances for the imperfections which are sometimes adherent to the most amiable qualities.

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#### NECESSITY OF A PLAN OF LIFE.

It is most necessary to lay down principles on which we are to form our general conduct. If we set out without principles of any kind, there can be no regular plan of life, nor any firmness in conduct. No person can know where they are to find us; nor on what behaviour of ours they are to depend. If the principles which

we pitch upon for determining our course be of a variable nature; such, for instance, as popular opinion, reputation, or worldly interest; as these are often shifting and changing, they can impart no steadiness or consistency to conduct. Other principles there are, which some affect to adopt, founded on a sense of honor, on the beauty and excellency of virtue, and the dignity of human nature. But however fair these may be in appearance, they will be found ineffectual in many trying situations; unable to repress the violence of contending passions, or to support the heart under many discouragements and sorrows.

The only sure principles we can lay down for regulating our conduct, must be founded on the Christian religion, taken in its whole compass; not confined to the exercises of devotion, nor to the mere morality of social behaviour; but extending to the whole direction of our conduct towards God and towards man. The foundation is to be laid in faith in Christ as the Saviour of the world, through whose merits only we can look for final acceptance with God. We must evince the sincerity of our faith by good works; that is, by a faithful discharge of all the duties incumbent upon us in our several stations of life: continually looking up to Divine grace for assistance in the part assigned us to act; and trusting to that recompense of our present labors, which is promised to the virtuous in a future and better world.—supposing that, having laid the foundation in such principles, we set forth to act a worthy and virtuous part; resolved that, whatever may befall us, *till we die we will not remove our integrity from us; that our hearts shall not reproach us so long as we live*; Job, xxvii. 5, 6.

FEELINGS PROPER FOR ENTERING UPON THE  
DUTIES OF LIFE.

As all unseasonable returns to the levity of youth ought to be laid aside—an admonition which equally belongs to both the sexes—still more are we to guard against those intemperate indulgences of pleasure to which the young are unhappily prone. From these we can not too soon retreat. They open the path to ruin in every period of our days. As long, however, as these excesses are confined to the first stage of life, hope is left, that when this fever of the spirits shall abate, sobriety may gain the ascendant, and wiser counsels have power to influence conduct. But after the season of youth is past, if its intemperate spirit remain; if, instead of listening to the calls of honor, and bending attention to the cares and the business of life, the same course of idleness and sensuality continue to be pursued; the case becomes more desperate. A sad presumption arises, that long immaturity is to prevail; and that the pleasures and passions of the youth are to sink and overwhelm the adult. Difficult, I confess, it may prove to overcome the attachments which youthful habits had for a long while been forming. Hard, at the beginning, is the task to impose on our conduct restraints which are altogether unaccustomed and new. But this is a trial which every one must undergo, on entering on new scenes of action, and new periods of life. Let those who are in this situation bethink themselves that all is now at stake. Their character and honor, their future fortune and success in the world, depend, in a great measure, on the steps they take when first they appear on the stage of active life. The world then looks



to them with an observing eye. It studies their behaviour; and interprets all their motions, as presages of the line of future conduct which they mean to hold. Now, therefore, *put away childish things*; dismiss your former trifling amusements and youthful pleasures; blast not the hopes which your friends are willing to conceive of you. Higher occupations, more serious cares, await you. Turn your mind to the steady and vigorous discharge of the part you are called to act.

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## ORDER AND METHOD.

THE observance of order and method is of high consequence for the improvement of present time. He who performs every employment in its due place and season, suffers no part of time to escape without profit. He multiplies his days; for he lives much in little space. Whereas, he who neglects order in the arrangement of his occupations, is always losing the present in returning upon the past, and trying, in vain, to recover it when gone. Let me advise you frequently to make the present employment of time an object of thought. Ask yourselves, about what are you now busied? What is the ultimate scope of your present pursuits and cares? Can you justify them to yourselves? Are they likely to produce anything that will survive the moment, and bring forth some fruit for futurity? He who can give no satisfactory answer to such questions as these, has reason to suspect that his employment of the present is not tending either to his advantage or his honor. Finally, let me admonish you, that while you study to improve, you

should endeavor also to enjoy the present hour. Let it not be disturbed with groundless discontent, or poisoned with foolish anxieties about what is to come; but look up to heaven, and acknowledge, with a grateful heart, the actual blessings you enjoy. If you must admit that you are now in health, peace, and safety, without any particular or uncommon evils to afflict your condition; what more can you reasonably look for in this vain and uncertain world? How little can the greatest prosperity add to such a state! Will any future situation ever make you happy, if now, with so few causes of grief, you imagine yourselves miserable? The evil lies in the state of your mind, not in your condition of fortune; and by no alteration of circumstances it is likely to be remedied.

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## ON THE LAST JUDGMENT.

### ARGUMENTS DRAWN FROM REASON.

By taking a view of the arguments which reason affords for the belief of a general judgment, our faith in the discoveries of the Gospel will receive confirmation, from discerning their consonance with the natural sentiments of the human heart

In the first place, and as the foundation of all, I begin with observing that there is in the nature of things, a real and eternal difference between right and wrong, between a virtuous and an immoral conduct; a difference which all men discern of themselves, and which leads them unavoidably to think of some actions as deserving of blame and punishment, and of others, as worthy of praise

and reward. If all actions were conceived as indifferent in their nature, no idea of justice and retribution would be found among men; they would not consider themselves as in any view accountable for their actions to any superior. But this is far from being the case. Every man feels himself under a law; the law of his being, which he cannot violate without being self-condemned. The most ignorant heathen knows and feels that, when he hath committed an unjust or cruel action, he has committed a crime, and deserves punishment. Never was there a nation on the face of the earth, among whom there did not prevail a consciousness that, by inhumanity and fraud, they justly exposed themselves to the hatred of those around them, and to the displeasure of any secret invisible Power that ruled the world. This, therefore, may be assumed as an incontrovertible principle, that the difference of good and evil in actions is not founded on arbitrary opinions or institutions, but in the nature of things, and the nature of man; and accords with the universal sense of the human kind. This being the case, it is certainly reasonable,

In the second place, to think that the Ruler of the world will make some distinction among his creatures according to their actions; and if this distinction be not made, or only imperfectly made in this life, there will be some future state of existence in which he will openly reward and punish. To suppose God to be a mere indifferent spectator of the conduct of his creatures, regarding with an equal eye the evil and the good, is in effect to annihilate his existence; as it contradicts every notion which mankind have entertained of a Supreme Being as just and good. It would re-

present him as inferior in character to many of his creatures on earth ; as there is no man of tolerable virtue and humanity who is not shocked at the commission of atrocious crimes, and who does not desire to see the guilty punished, the innocent protected, and the virtuous rewarded.—If there exist at all a God who governs the world, (and what nation has not acknowledged him to exist ?) as a governor he undoubtedly will act ; and as such, will, somewhere, and at some period or other, reward and punish, according as his creatures obey or violate that law which he originally implanted in their hearts.—Whether this be completely done in the present world, is not a point that requires long discussion. The experience of all ages has shown, that pain and pleasure, prosperity and adversity, are not at present distributed by Providence exactly according to the measure of men's probity and worth, but are apparently scattered with a promiscuous hand. Hence the ancient complaint, that *all things come alike to all men ; that there is one event to the righteous and the wicked ; that to poverty and disappointment the righteous are often left, while the tabernacles of robbers prosper.*—An inference from hence might at first view arise not favorable to the doctrine we now support ; but we have to observe,

In the third place, that although full retribution be not as yet made to the good and to the evil, yet plain marks appear of the government already begun and carried on by God in the universe, though not fully completed ; marks of his favoring and taking part with virtue, and of his providing punishments for vice. This observation deserves to be particularly attended to ; as it is one of the chief arguments for a future Judgment.—In the pres-

ent system of things, had the righteous been uniformly happy, and the wicked at all times miserable, future Judgment might have appeared unnecessary, as justice had already taken place. On the other hand, had no distinction whatever taken place in the present system between the righteous and the wicked as to happiness and misery, there might have been ground to expect that, since universal disorder at present prevailed, disorder would ever continue, and never be rectified by any future Judgment. But neither of these suppositions is founded in fact. The present state of the moral world is neither a state of complete justice and order, nor of absolute disorder, but a state of order and justice begun and carried to a certain length, though left as yet imperfect.—Observe, my brethren, that, in the whole structure and constitution of things, God hath shown himself to be favorable to virtue, and inimical to vice and guilt. He hath made a fixed provision for happiness to virtue, by the powerful recommendation which it carries to universal esteem and love; by the manifold benefits which it procures to society; by the health, peace, and comfort of mind which it brings to the virtuous man. At the same time, from the crimes of the wicked, a multitude of miseries is made infallibly to spring; loss of character and esteem, and of confidence and regard in society; health always impaired by vice; and all comfortable enjoyment of life disturbed by an uneasy companion, which the sinner carries about him in his own conscience, upbraiding him for his crimes, and threatening him with the displeasure of the Almighty.

These are not things of casual or accidental occurrence, but of universal experience, taking their rise from the constitution of our nature, and from

the fixed laws which regulate human events. They show us what the direct tendency of virtue and vice is appointed by Providence to be; and if this tendency be not in every instance carried into effect, owing to circumstances which belong to our present state of probation and discipline, yet such an established natural tendency carries a sufficient intimation of the will and pleasure of our Creator.

We see his *throne already set for Judgment*. By his beginning in this world both to reward and to punish, we clearly behold him acting as a Governor and a Judge, and are led to prognosticate what course he will hereafter hold. By the constitution of things which he has fixed here, he has as plainly signified that he favors the virtuous, and is displeased with the wicked, as if he had declared it to us by a voice from the clouds.—Although the present state of mankind requires that the just should sometimes suffer, and the sinner be allowed to prosper, the strongest presumption still remains that there is a period to come, when God will complete his righteous government, by making the one fully blest, and rendering the other as miserable as they deserve to be; especially as we can observe,

In the fourth place, that a satisfactory account may be given why judgment is at present postponed, and complete retribution not made, either to the good or bad. We are to take notice, that even among men, the wisdom and justice of government do not consist in immediately rewarding and punishing on every occasion, but in exercising those acts of government publicly, at such times and with such circumstances as may have the most powerful effect for the benefit of society. A similar consideration perfectly accounts for the full execution of justice being displayed by God in this

world; for rewards and punishments being only begun here, but left unfinished. Were they completed in this world to their full extent, all the purposes of a state of trial and discipline would be defeated. No room would be left for exercise and improvement to the good in many virtues, if they never were to undergo any trial; if they felt full reward immediately conferred on every righteous action they performed, and saw the wicked instantly cut off as soon as a crime was committed. For salutary discipline, therefore, to the good, in order to improve their virtues; and from patience to the bad, in order to give them room for repentance; it was fit and wise that final judgment should at present be postponed. Divine justice stands for a while as behind the veil, and leaves men at full scope to act according to their different dispositions, that their real characters may be fully displayed; the fidelity of the upright be tried and proved, and the obstinately wicked left without excuse.—The delay of judgment, therefore, and the seeming inequality that now takes place in the ways of Providence, are so far from forming any ground of suspicion that judgment will never come, that on the contrary, it is an argument of the wisdom of the Divine government, and necessarily enters into the plans it is now carrying forward.

Such are the presumptions which reason furnishes for rendering it more than probable that, at the conclusion of human things, God will *render to every one according to his works*. They may serve to strengthen our faith; but on mere reasonings our faith rests not. God in his mercy has given us surer light in an article of so great importance.—To the consideration, therefore, of the discoveries

which the gospel of Christ hath made to us, we now proceed.

#### ARGUMENTS DRAWN FROM SCRIPTURE.

You all know how often we are assured, in the New Testament, that God hath *appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness*; a day and an hour which no man knoweth, but which is fixed in the counsels of Heaven. In the sacred writings a very particular account is given us of the whole procedure of that solemn day, accompanied with an assemblage of circumstances of the most awful and terrific nature. The scene is such as forbids all attempts to heighten, or even to do it justice by human description. Beneath such a subject all imagination sinks. The efforts of the declaimer or the poet are here alike in vain.—We are informed that the Last Day shall be ushered in by *signs in the sun, and signs in the moon and stars*; upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after the things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. The sound of a trumpet shall be heard, at which the dead shall rise out of their graves. The sign of the Son of man shall appear. He shall come in a cloud with power and great glory, and all the holy Angels with him. A great white throne shall be set, and he shall sit thereon in his glory. Before him shall be gathered all nations. Books shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of the things which are found written in the books. He shall separate the righteous from the wicked as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the righteous on



*his right hand, and the wicked on his left! Then shall he say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. To them on his left he shall say, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; and these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* Luke xxi. 25. Dan. vii. 9. Matth. xxv. 31.—Whether every one of the circumstances here set forth, is to be understood in a strictly literal sense, or with some measure of mystical and allegorical interpretation, it is not easy to determine, nor is it essential for us to know. Regard must be had to the figurative style frequently employed by the sacred writers, of which we find so many examples in the prophetic writings and the Book of Revelation, wherein those spiritual divine things which are above our conception, are set forth under such representations of sensible objects and appearances as are most calculated to strike and impress our minds. The circumstance, for instance, of books being opened before the Judge, as containing a register of every man's actions, and of the dead being judged from what had been written in those books, is plainly a metaphorical allusion to what is practised among men; designed merely to convey the strongest impression of God's strict and accurate observation of the minutest particulars of men's behaviour on earth. It is sufficient for us to be satisfied, that whatever tremendous grandeur may attend the judgment of the Last Day, it will be conducted in such a manner as shall be perfectly suitable to the perfections of the Almighty.—Resting on such facts as are plainly and explicitly revealed on this subject, let us consider,

In the first place, the Person who is to act as a Judge, even the eternal Son of God. We must all, says the text, appear *before the judgment seat of Christ*. This is repeated in many passages of the New Testament. The day of judgment is termed *the day of the Son of man*. *The Father*, we are told, *judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son*. John v. 22.—This constitution of Providence is, in many respects, wise, fit, and gracious. It was highly proper that He who once, in the cause of God and mankind, stood as a criminal before impious judges on earth, should be thus signally vindicated and honored, by appearing in the illustrious character of the Judge of all the earth. It was fit that the character of the Judge and Sovereign should be made known, as added to the other characters he bore of Priest and Prophet, in order to give weight and authority to all his precepts, from the awful consideration that on our obedience to him depends our everlasting fate.—But the most striking and important circumstance in this appointment of Providence is the assurance which it affords us of the perfect equity of this final judgment. For here we behold a Judge who is taken, as we may say, from among ourselves. He dwelt among us on earth, and did not disdain to call us brethren. He knows experimentally what human passions and human frailties are; and what the apostle to the Hebrews says of him as a Priest, may be as fully applied to him as a Judge. *We have not a Judge who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but One who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. The infinite majesty of the Supreme Being is an object at all times overwhelming to the mind. In the situation of a Judge particularly, it might fill us

with dismay. But in the Person of our blessed Redeemer, that majesty is placed in a milder light. The attribute of mercy comes forward in so conspicuous a manner as to allay the dread we would otherwise entertain. To the obstinate and hardened sinner, the judgment of our Saviour may indeed justly occasion terror. Well may they be afraid of appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ, who have scorned and despised him and his religion. But to the pious and the humble, no consideration can carry more comfort than that they are to appear in judgment before Him who so loved the human race as to die for them; and from whom, therefore, may be expected every favorable allowance which their case will admit.—From the contemplation of the Judge, let us,

In the second place, turn our thoughts towards the persons who are to be judged. These, we are again and again informed, shall be all mankind; both the quick and the dead; those who shall then be found upon the earth; and all the past generations who have finished their course, and been long ago gathered unto their fathers. *We must all,* says the text, *appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.*—No privilege shall exempt the great, no obscurity shelter the low, from the judgment of God. All the frivolous distinctions which fashion and vanity had introduced among men, shall at that day be annihilated. No longer shall we then appear under the personated characters of high and low, of rich and poor.—Under the simple characters of men and subjects of God, we shall be brought forth to be judged according to our works. In the one great distinction of good and bad, of righteous or wicked, all other distinctions shall then be eternally lost.—Let the foresight of this

humble the pride of the ostentatious and the great. Thou, who now carriest thy head so high, shalt, upon the same footing with thy lowest dependant, stand before the tribunal of the Almighty. Thou, who now oppressest thy weak brother with impunity, shalt then tremble for thine own safety as much, perhaps more than he, for *there is no respect of persons with God*.—The Last Day is justly styled the *day of the revelation of the secrets of all hearts*. Stripped of all disguise, the character of every man shall be unveiled to public view. Then shall the false friend be detected, the concealed slanderer be exposed, the secret adulterer, the treacherous enemy, the hypoeritical pretender, be all brought to light.—What a check should the thought of this discovery give to the arts of dissimulation and falsehood! What avails it thee, O wise man of the world! to pass for a short time with fair colors before the eye of men, if by the eye of God thou art already discovered, and shalt at last be discovered to the view of all mankind? If now thou art so solicitous to conceal thy real character from the world, and canst not bear that the designs and intrigues which have passed through thy mind in the course of but one day should all be made known, dost thou not tremble at the thought of the whole machinations of thy life being brought forth and proclaimed before assembled men and angels?—At this great day, too, when secret vice is made known in order to be punished, secret virtue shall be disclosed and rewarded. The humble good man, who passed unnoticed through the obscurity of private life; whose days, if not marked by any splendid deeds, were ennobled by virtuous actions; shall then be singled out from the crowd, and brought forward

as the friend of God and Heaven.—The anguish of the wicked, upon the discovery and comparison of the life of such a person with their own, is thus beautifully described by one of the Apocryphal writers: *This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor. Now he is numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints. But we wearied ourselves in the way of destruction. What hath pride profited us? Or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hastened by. But the righteous live for evermore. Their reward also is with the Lord; and the care of them with the Most High.* Wisdom of Solomon, v. 3—15. From this view of the persons who are to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, let us,

In the third place, go on to the consideration of the things for which they are to be judged. These, we are told in the text, are all *the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad*. This is the constant tenor of Scripture, that men are to be judged *according to their actions*. It is not said that men are to be finally judged according to their principles or belief, but *according to their works*. This does not lead to any conclusion that principles or belief are not essential in forming a character. Without good principles it cannot be expected there can be any regular tenor of good actions. But actions are the test of principles. Whatever we may pretend as to our belief, it is the train of our actions that must show whether our principles have been good or bad; and supposing them ever so good, whether we have allowed them to exert a proper influence on our conduct. The con-

stant doctrine of the gospel is, *by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew vii. 21. Of all the actions we have done, it is represented that, in the day of judgment, strict examination shall be taken. Not our public conduct only, and what we reckon the momentous parts of our life, but the indulgence of our private pleasures, the amusements of our secret thoughts and idle hours, shall be brought into account. According to that emblematical representation given in the gospel, which I before mentioned as an expressive figure, there is an invisible pen always writing over our heads, and making an exact register of all the transactions of our life.—How careful and circumspect ought this to render us over every part of our behaviour? If any of our actions were of a transient and fugitive nature; if they were to die with us, and to be forgotten as soon as we are gone, there might be some excuse for a loose and inconsiderate conduct. But we know the case to be widely different; and that what we are doing now, we do for eternity. None of our actions perish and are forgotten. They will all accompany us to the tribunal of God. They will there testify, either for or against us; and, however much we might wish to disclaim some of them, they may be considered as lifting up their voices and saying, “We are thine, for thou hast done us; we are thy works, and we will follow thee!”

It will now be said, if so severe a scrutiny must be undergone for all we have done and thought, who shall be able to stand before God in Judgment?—How far from innocence shall the best of

us be found at that day !—The thought is undoubtedly alarming. But let us not despond ; we are assured, *there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared. He is not extreme to mark iniquity : for he knows our frame, and remembers we are dust.* Powerful is the atonement of our blessed Redeemer to procure pardon for the greatest sinner who has been penitent. We have all reason to believe, that amidst the numberless infirmities which attend humanity, what the great Judge will chiefly regard, is the habitual prevailing turn of our heart and life ; how far we have been actuated by a sincere desire to do our duty. This we know for certain, that all the measures of this judgment shall be conducted with the most perfect equity. God will not exact from any man what he had never given him. He will judge him according to the degree of light that was afforded him, according to the means of knowledge and improvement that were put into his hands. Hence many a virtuous heathen shall be preferred before many mere professors of Christian faith. *They shall come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God ; when the children of the kingdom are cast out.* Luke xii. 29. Matthew viii. 11. For as the Apostle to the Romans hath taught us, *they who sinned without the law*, that is, without the knowledge of the written law, *shall perish, shall be judged, without the law, for when the Gentiles which have not the law, do, by nature, the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves.* Rom. ii. 12, 14. In the account given by our Lord of the procedure of the last judgment, in the 25th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, particular stress is laid upon works of beneficence and mercy ; on

the hungry being fed, the naked being clothed, and the sick being visited by the righteous. But though in that parable, no virtues of any other kind are particularized, we are certainly not to infer any exclusion of other parts of duty; of piety, justice, temperance, and purity; as requisite to the character of the man, who, at the Last Day, will be accepted by God. The scope of the parable was to impress that covetous and selfish nation of the Jews, to whom the parable was addressed, with a deep sense of the importance of those virtues in which they were remarkably deficient, and which are in themselves so essential, compassion and humanity to their brethren.—It now only remains,

In the last place, to fix our attention on that final definitive sentence, which is to close the whole procedure of the Last Day, and to terminate for ever the hopes and fears of the human race. The righteous are by the great Judge called to eternal life and happiness, and the wicked appointed to go into everlasting punishment. Into those future habitations of the good and the bad, it is not ours to penetrate. All that we know is, that after the Judge hath pronounced the righteous to be the *blessed of his Father*, they shall be *caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so they shall be ever with the Lord*, (1 Thes. iv. 17); received into mansions where all the inhabitants shall be blest; but where we are taught there shall be different degrees of exaltation and felicity, according to the advancement which men had made in holiness and virtue; *one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and one star differing from another star in glory*. 1 Corinth. xv. 41. On the misery prepared for the reprobate, it would be shocking to dwell.



and in a high degree improper and presumptuous in us to descant on the degree and duration of those punishments which infinite justice and wisdom may see cause to inflict on the incurably wicked.—The whole great scheme of Providence being now completed, and its ways fully justified to all rational beings, well may universal acclamations of praise arise from all the heavenly hosts; *Hallelujah to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb of God for ever and ever ! Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, thou King of Saints !* This earth, which had been so long the theatre of human actions and human glory, having now accomplished the purpose for which, as a temporary structure, it was erected, shall, at this consummation of things, finally disappear from the universe. *The heavens shall pass away with a great noise : the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up ; and its place shall know it no more !* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter ; Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man ;* the whole of his duty, his interest, and his happiness. It is the road to a comfortable life, to a peaceful death, to a happy eternity. *For God, addeth the wise man, shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Let the prospect of this judgment so dwell on our minds as to produce that degree of seriousness, which, in this vain and changing world, becomes us as Christians, becomes us as men. If it be our care to preserve a good conscience, and to do the things that are right, that judgment will not be to us an object of dismay. On the contrary, amidst

the many discouragements which our virtuous endeavors meet with at present, it will be a comfort to think that *verily there is a just God to judge the earth*, who shall in the end *make all crooked things straight*, and fully recompense his servants for the hardships they may now suffer by persevering in the path of integrity.—This is the season, not of reaping, but of sowing; not of rest and enjoyment, but of labor and combat. You are now running the race; hereafter you shall receive the prize. You are now approving your fidelity, in the midst of trials; at the Last Day you shall receive the crown of the faithful. *Be patient, therefore, establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. The Judge is at hand; and his reward is with him.*

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### ON EXTREMES IN RELIGIOUS AND MORAL CONDUCT.

WISDOM is no less necessary in religious and moral, than in civil conduct. Unless there be a proper degree of light in the understanding, it will not be enough that there are good dispositions in the heart. Without regular guidance, they will often err from the right scope. They will be always wavering and unsteady; nay, on some occasions they may betray us into evil. This is too much verified by that propensity to run into extremes which so often appears in the behaviour of men. How many have originally set out with good principles and intentions, who, through want of discretion in the application of their principles, have in the end injured themselves, and brought

discredit on religion. There is a certain temperate mean, in the observance of which piety and virtue consist. On each side there lies a dangerous extreme. Bewildering paths open, by deviating into which, men are apt to forfeit all the praise of their good intentions ; and to finish with reproach what they have begun with honor. This is the ground of the wise man's exhortation in the text. *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left ; remove thy foot from evil.* In discoursing from these words, I propose to point out some of the extremes into which men are apt to run in religion and morals ; and to suggest directions for guarding against them.

#### RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE.

With regard to religious principle in general, it may perhaps be expected that I should warn you of the danger of being on one hand too rigid in adhering to it, and on the other hand too easy in relaxing it. But the distinction between these supposed extremes, I conceive to have no foundation. No man can be too strict in his adherence to a principle of duty. Here there is no extreme. All relaxation of principle is criminal. What conscience dictates is to be ever obeyed. Its commands are universally sacred. Even though it should be misled, yet, as long as we conceive it to utter the voice of God, in disobeying it we sin. The error, therefore, to be here avoided, is not too scrupulous or tender regard to conscience, but too little care to have conscience properly enlightened

with respect to what is matter of duty and of sin. Receive not without examination whatever human tradition has consecrated as sacred. Recur, on every occasion, to those great fountains of light and knowledge which are opened to you in the pure word of God. Distinguish with care between the superstitious fancies of men, and the everlasting commandments of God. Exhaust not on trifles that zeal which ought to be reserved for the weightier matters of the law. Overload not conscience with what is frivolous and unnecessary. But when you have once drawn the line with intelligence and precision between duty and sin, that line you ought on no occasion to transgress.

Though there is no extreme in the reverence due to conscience, there may undoubtedly be an extreme in laying too much stress, either on mere principle, or on mere practice. Here we must take particular care not to *turn to the right hand, nor to the left*; but to *hold faith and a good conscience* united, as the Scripture with great propriety exhorts us. 1 Timothy, i. 19. The error of resting wholly on faith, or wholly on works, is one of those seductions which most easily mislead men; under the semblance of piety on the one hand, and virtue on the other. This is not an error peculiar to our times. It has obtained in every age of the Christian church. It has run through all the different modes of false religion. It forms the chief distinction of all the various sects which have divided, and which still continue to divide, the church; according as they have leaned most to the side of belief, or to the side of morality.

Did we listen candidly to the voice of Scripture, it would guard us against either extreme. The

Apostle Paul everywhere testifies that by no works of our own we can be justified, and that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. The Apostle James as clearly shows that faith, if it be unproductive of good works, justifies no man. Between those sentiments there is no opposition. Faith, without works, is nugatory and insignificant. It is a foundation without any superstructure raised upon it. It is a fountain which sends forth no stream; a tree which neither bears fruit nor affords shade. Good works again, without good principles, are a fair but airy structure; without firmness or stability. They resemble the house built on the sand; the reed which shakes with every wind. You must join the two in full union if you would exhibit the character of a real Christian. He who sets faith in opposition to morals, or morals in opposition to faith, is equally an enemy to the interests of religion. He holds up to view an imperfect and disfigured form, in the room of what ought to command respect from all beholders. By leaning to one extreme, he is in danger of falling into vice; by the other, of running into impiety.

#### MORAL VIRTUE.

Whatever the belief of men be, they generally pride themselves in the possession of some good moral qualities. The sense of duty is deeply rooted in the human heart. Without some pretence to virtue there is no self-esteem; and no man wishes to appear in his own view as entirely worthless. But as there is a constant strife between the lower and higher parts of our nature, between inclination and principle, this produces much contradiction

and inconsistency in conduct. Hence arise most of the extremes into which men run in their moral behaviour; resting their whole worth on that good quality to which, by constitution or temper, they are most inclined.

One of the first and most common of those extremes is that of placing all virtue either in justice on the one hand, or in generosity on the other. The opposition between these is most discernible among two different classes of men in society. They who have earned their fortune by a laborious and industrious life, are naturally tenacious of what they have painfully acquired. To justice they consider themselves as obliged; but to go beyond it in acts of kindness, they consider as superfluous and extravagant. They will not take any advantage of others, which conscience tells them is iniquitous; but neither will they make any allowance for their necessities and wants. They contend with rigorous exactness for what is due to themselves. They are satisfied if no man suffer unjustly by them. That no one is benefited by them gives them little concern.—Another set of men place their whole merit in generosity and mercy; while to justice and integrity they pay small regard. These are persons generally of higher rank and of easy fortune. To them justice appears a sort of vulgar virtue, requisite chiefly in the petty transactions which those of inferior station carry on with one another. But humanity and liberality they consider as more refined virtues, which dignify their character and cover all their failings. They can relent at representations of distress; can bestow with ostentatious generosity; can even occasionally share their wealth with a companion of whom they are fond; while at the

same time they withhold from others what is due to them; are negligent of their family and their relations; and to the just demands of their creditors give no attention.

Both these classes of men run to a faulty extreme. They divide moral virtue between them. Each takes that part of it only which suits his temper. Without justice there is no virtue. But without humanity and mercy, no virtuous character is complete. The one man leans to the extreme of parsimony; the other to that of profusion. The temper of the one is unfeeling; the sensibility of the other is thoughtless. The one you may in some degree respect, but you can not love. The other may be loved, but can not be respected: and it is difficult to say which character is most defective. We must undoubtedly begin with being just, before we attempt to be generous. At the same time, he who goes no further than bare justice, stops at the beginning of virtue. We are commanded to *do justice*, but to *love mercy*. The one virtue regulates our actions; the other improves our heart and affections. Each is equally necessary to the happiness of the world. Justice is the pillar that upholds the whole fabric of human society. Mercy is the genial ray which cheers and warms the habitations of men. The perfection of our social character consists in properly tempering the two with one another; in holding that middle course which admits of our being just without being rigid; and allows us to be generous, without being unjust.

#### MANNERS.

We must next guard against either too great severity or too great facility of manners. These

are extremes of which we every day behold instances in the world. He who leans to the side of severity is harsh in his censures, and narrow in his opinions. He can not condescend to others in things indifferent. He has no allowance to make for human frailty, or for the difference of age, rank, or temper among mankind. With him, all gaiety is sinful levity; and every amusement is a crime. To this extreme the admonition of Solomon may be understood to belong. *Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise. Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Eccles. vii. 16. When the severity of man is hypocritical, and assumed as a cloak to secret indulgence, it is one of the worst prostitutions of religion. But I now consider it, not as the effect of design, but of natural austerity of temper, and of contracting maxims of conduct. Its influence upon the person himself is to render him gloomy and sour; upon others, to alienate them both from his society and his counsels; upon religion, to set it forth as a morose and forbidding principle.—The opposite extreme to this is perhaps still more dangerous: that of too great facility and accommodation to the ways of others. The man of this character, partly from indolent weakness, and partly from softness of temper, is disposed to a tame and universal assent. Averse either to contradict or to blame, he goes along with the manners that prevail. He views every character with indulgent eye; and with good dispositions in his breast, and a natural reluctance to profligacy and vice, he is enticed to the commission of evils which he condemns, merely through want of fortitude to oppose others.

Nothing, it must be confessed, in moral conduct is more difficult than to avoid turning here, either



*to the right hand or to the left.* One of the greatest trials both of wisdom and virtue is, to preserve a just medium between that harshness of austerity which disgusts and alienates mankind, and that weakness of good nature which opens the door to sinful excess. The one separates us too much from the world. The other connects us too closely with it; and seduces us to *follow the multitude in doing evil.* One who is of the former character studies too little to be agreeable, in order to render himself useful. He who is of the latter, by studying too much to be agreeable, forfeits his innocence. If the one hurt religion, by clothing it in the garb of unnecessary strictness, the other, by unwarrantable compliance, strengthens the power of corruption in the world. The one borders on the character of the Pharisee; the other on that of the Sadducee. True religion enjoins us to stand at an equal distance from both; and to pursue the difficult, but honorable aim of uniting good nature with fixed religious principle; affable manners with untainted virtue.

#### PUBLIC OPINION.

Farther, we run to one extreme, when we condemn altogether the opinions of mankind; to another, when we court their praise too eagerly. The former discovers a high degree of pride and self-conceit. The latter betrays servility of spirit. We are formed by Nature and Providence to be connected with one another. No man can stand entirely alone and independent of all his fellow-creatures. A reasonable regard, therefore, for their esteem and good opinion is a commendable principle. It flows from humanity, and coincides with

the desire of being mutually useful. But if that regard be carried too far, it becomes the source of much corruption. For, in the present state of mankind, the praise of the world often interferes with our acting that steady and conscientious part which gains the approbation of God. Hence arises the difficulty of drawing a proper line between the allowable regard for reputation and the excessive desire of praise. On the one side, and on the other, danger meets us; and either extreme will be pernicious to virtue.

He who extinguishes all regard to the sentiments of mankind, suppresses one incentive to honorable deeds; nay, he removes one of the strongest checks on vice. For where there is no desire of praise, there will be also no sense of reproach and shame; and when this sense is destroyed, the way is paved to open profligacy. On the other hand, he who is actuated solely by the love of human praise, encroaches on the higher respect which he owes to conscience and to God. Hence virtue is often counterfeited; and many a splendid appearance has been exhibited to the world, which had no basis in real principle, or inward affection. Hence religious truths have been disguised or unfairly represented, in order to be suited to popular taste. Hence the Scribes and Pharisees rejected our blessed Lord, *because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*—Turn, therefore, neither to *the right hand nor to the left.* Affect not to despise what the world thinks of your conduct and character; and yet, let not the sentiments of the world entirely rule you. Let a desire of esteem be one motive of your conduct; but let it hold a subordinate place. Measure the regard that is due to the opinions of men

by the degree in which these coincide with the law of God.

#### WORLDLY INTEREST.

Allow me next to suggest the danger of running to the extreme of anxiety about worldly interests on the one hand, and of negligence on the other. It is hard to say which of these extremes is fraught with most vice and most misery. Industry and diligence are unquestionable duties strictly enforced on all Christians; and he who fails in making suitable provision for his household and family, is pronounced to be *worse than an infidel*. But there are bounds within which our concern for worldly success must be confined. For anxiety is the certain poison of human life. It debases the mind; and sharpens all the passions. It involves men in perpetual distractions and tormenting cares; and leads them aside from what ought to be the great scope of human action. Anxiety is in general the effect of a covetous temper. Negligence is commonly the offspring of licentiousness, and always the parent of universal disorder. By anxiety you render yourselves miserable. By negligence you too often occasion the ruin of others.—The anxious man is the votary of riches; the negligent man is the votary of pleasure. Each offers his mistaken worship at the shrine of a false deity; and each shall reap only such rewards as an idol can bestow; the one sacrificing the enjoyment and improvement of the present to vain cares about futurity, the other so totally taken up in enjoying the present as to store the future with certain misery.—True virtue holds a temperate course between these extremes; neither careless of to-morrow, nor

taking too much thought for it ; diligent, but not anxious ; prudent, but not covetous ; attentive to provide comfortable accommodation on earth, but chiefly concerned to *lay up treasures in Heaven.*

#### BUSINESS.

I shall only warn you farther against the extreme of engaging in a course of life too busy and hurried, or of devoting yourselves to one too retired and unemployed. We are formed for a mixture of action and retreat. Our connexions with society, and the performance of duties which we owe to one another, necessarily engage us in active life. What we owe to ourselves requires occasional retirement. For he who lives always in the bustle of the world, can not, it is to be feared, always preserve his virtue pure. Sentiments of piety will be deprived of that nourishment and support which they would derive from meditation and devotion. His temper will be often ruffled and disturbed. His passions will be kept too much on the stretch. From the contagious manners which everywhere abound, he will not be able to avoid contracting some dangerous infection. On the other hand, he who flies to total retreat, in order either to enjoy ease, or to escape from the temptations of the world, will often find disquiet meeting him in solitude, and the worst temptations arising from within himself. Unoccupied by active and honorable pursuits, unable to devote his whole time to improving thoughts, many an evil passion will start up, and occupy the vacant hour. Sullenness and gloom will be in danger of overwhelming him. Peevish displeasure, and suspicions of mankind, are apt to persecute those who withdraw them-

selves altogether from the haunts of men. Steer, therefore, a middle course, between a life oppressed with business on the one hand, and burdened, for the burden is no less, with idleness on the other. Provide for yourselves matter of fair and honest pursuit, to afford a proper object to the active powers of the mind. Temper business with serious meditation, and enliven retreat by returns of action and industry.

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## ON HABITS.

HABITS are those powers of the mind which arise from a collection, or rather a successive course of ordinary actions. As they are formed by a concatenation of those actions, so they may be weakened by frequent and allowed interruptions: and if many contiguous links are wilfully broken, the habits themselves are in danger of being totally demolished.

If we may be allowed to change the metaphor, we would observe that good habits produce a sound healthy constitution of mind; they are tonics which gradually, but infallibly, invigorate the intellectual man.—A silent course of habits is a part of our character or rather conduct, which in a great measure depends on industry and application; on self-denial and watchfulness, on diligence in establishing right pursuits, and vigilance in checking such as are pernicious. Habit being an engine put into our hands for the noblest and most beneficial purposes; and being one, which, having the free command of our own faculties, we have a power to use and direct—a power, indeed, derived

from God as all our other possessions are—yet having this power, it rests with ourselves whether we shall improve it by a vigorous exertion in a right bent, or whether we shall turn it against our Maker, and direct the course of our conduct to the offending, instead of pleasing God.

Habits are not so frequently formed by vehement incidental efforts on a few great occasions, as by a calm and steady perseverance in the ordinary course of duty. If this were uniformly followed up, we should be spared that occasional violence to our feelings, that agitating resistance, which, by wasting the spirits, leads more feeble minds to dread the recurrence of the same necessity, which induces a painful feeling, the consequence of negligence, even where there is real rectitude of heart; while the regular adoption of right habits, indented by repetition, establishes such a tranquillity of spirit, as contributes to promote happiness no less than virtue. The mind, like the body, gains robustness and activity by the habitual exercise of its powers. Occasional right actions may be caprice, may be vanity, may be impulse, but hardly deserve the name of virtue, till they proceed from a principle which habit has moulded into a frame; then the right principle which first set them at work, continues to keep them at it, and finally becomes so prevalent, that there is a kind of spontaneity in the act, which keeps up the energy, without constant sensible reference to the spring which first set it in motion;—good habits and good dispositions, ripened by repetition into virtue, and sanctified by prayer into holiness. If we allow that vicious habits persisted in, lay us more and more open to the dominion of our spiritual adversary, can we doubt

that virtuous habits acquire proportional strength from the superinduced aid of the spirit of God?

The more uniform is our conformity to the rules of virtue and purity, the less we may require to be reminded of the particular influence of the motive. We need not, nor indeed can we, recur every moment to the exact source of the action its flowing from an habitual sense of duty will generally explain the ground on which it is performed. If the heart is kept awake and alive in a cheerful obedience to God, the immediate motive of the immediate act is not likely to be a bad one. Many actions, indeed, require to be deliberated on, and whatever requires deliberation before we do it, demands scrutiny why we do it. This will lead to such an inquest into our motive as, if there be any want of sincerity in it, will tend to its detection.

Notwithstanding what has been urged above as to the exercise of constant assiduity in preference to mere occasional exertion, we would be understood to offer this counsel rather to the proficient than to the novice. As the beginnings are always difficult, especially to ardent spirits, such spirits would do well, particularly at their entrance on a more correct course, to select for themselves some single task of painful exertion, which, by bringing their mental vigor into full play, shall afford them so sensible an evidence of the conquest they have obtained, as will more than repay the labor of the conflict. A friend of the Author was so fully aware of the importance of thus taming an impatient temper, that she imposed upon herself the habit of beginning even any ordinary undertaking with the most difficult part of it, instead of following the usual method of proceeding from the

lower to the higher. If a language was to be learnt, she began with a very difficult author. If a scheme of economy was to be improved, she relinquished at once some prominent indulgence; if a vanity was to be cut off, she fixed on some strong act of self-denial which should appear a little disreputable to others, while it somewhat mortified herself. These incipient trials once got over, she had a large reward in finding all lesser ones in the same class comparatively light. The main victory was gained in the onset, the subsequent skirmishes cost little.

If it be said that the effort is too violent, the change too sudden, we apprehend the assertion is a mistake. When we have worked up ourselves, or rather are worked up by a superior agency to a strong measure, it becomes a point of honor, as well as of duty, to persist; we are ashamed of stopping, and especially of retreating, though we have no witness but God and our own hearts. Having once persevered, the victory is the reward. A slower change, though desirable, has less stimulus, less animation, is less sensibly marked; we cannot recur, as in the other case, to the hour of conquest, nor have we so clear a consciousness of having obtained it.

But the conquest we have won we must maintain. The fruits of the initiatory victory may be lost, if vigilance does not guard that which valor subdued. If the relinquishment of evil habits is so difficult, it is not less necessary to be watchful, lest we should insensibly slide into the negligence of such as are good. What we neglect, we gradually forget. This guard against declension is the more requisite, as the human mind is so limited, that one object quickly expels another. A new



idea takes possession as soon as its predecessor is driven out; and the very traces of former habits are effaced, not suddenly, but progressively; no two successive ideas being, perhaps, very dissimilar, while the last in the train will be of a character quite different, not from that which immediately preceded, but from that which first began to draw us off from the right habits; the impression continues to grow fainter, till that which at first was weakened, is at length obliterated.

If we do not establish the habit of the great statesman of Holland, to do only one thing at a time, we shall do nothing well; the whole of our understanding, however highly we may rate it, is not too much to give to any subject which is of sufficient importance to require an investigation at all; certainly is not great enough to afford being split into as many parts, as we may choose to take subjects simultaneously in hand. If we allow the different topics which require deliberation to break in on each other; if a second is admitted to a conference before we had dismissed the first, as neither will be distinctly considered, so neither is likely to obtain a just decision. These desultory pursuits obstruct the establishment of correct habits.

But it requires the firm union of a sound principle with an impartial judgment to ascertain that the habit is really good, or the mischief will be great in proportion to the pertinacity. For who can conceive a more miserable state, than for a man to be goaded on by a long perseverance in habits, which both his conscience and his understanding condemn? Even if upon conviction he renounces them, he has a long time to spend in backing, with the mortification at last, to find

himself only where he ought to have been at setting out.

Without insisting on the difficulty of totally subduing long-indulged habits of any gross vice, such as intemperance; we may remark, that it requires a long and painful process—and this even after a man is convinced of its turpitude, after he discovers evident marks of improvement—to conquer the habits of any fault, which, though not so scandalous in the eyes of the world, may be equally inconsistent with real piety.—Take the love of money, for instance. How reluctantly, if at all, is covetousness extirpated from the heart, where it has long been rooted! The imperfect convert has a conviction on his mind, nay, he has a feeling in his heart, that there is no such thing as being a Christian without liberality. This he adopts, in common with other just sentiments, and speaks of it as a necessary evidence of sincerity. He has got the whole Christian theory by heart, and such parts of it as do not trench upon this long-indulged corruption, he more or less brings into action. But in this tender point, though the profession is cheap, the practice is costly. An occasion is brought home to him, of exercising the grace he has been commending. He acknowledges its force, he does more; he feels it. If taken at the moment, something considerable might be done; but if any delay intervene, that delay is fatal; for from feeling he begins to calculate. Now there is a cooling property in calculation, which freezes the warm current that sensibility had set in motion. The old habit is too powerful for the young convert, yet he flatters himself that he has at once exercised charity and discretion. He takes comfort both from the liberal feeling which had resolved

to give the money, and the prudence which had saved it, laying to his heart the flattering unction, that he has only spared it for some more pressing demand, which, when it occurs, will again set him on feeling, and calculating, and saving.

Some well-meaning persons unintentionally confirm this kind of error. They are so zealous on the subject of sudden conversion, that they are too ready to pronounce, from certain warm expressions, that this change has taken place in their acquaintance, while evident symptoms of an unchanged nature continue to disfigure the character. They do not always wait till an alteration in the habits has given that best evidence of an interior alteration. They dwell so exclusively on miraculous changes, that they leave little to do for the convert, but to consider himself as an inactive recipient of grace; not as one who is to exhibit, by the change in his life, that mutation, which the divine spirit has produced on his heart. This too common error appears to arise, not only from enthusiasm, but partly from want of insight into the human character, of which habits are the ground-work, and in which right habits are not less the effect of grace for being gradually produced. We cannot, indeed, purify ourselves, any more than we can convert ourselves, it being equally the work of the Holy Spirit to infuse purity, as well as the other graces, into the heart; but it rests with us to exercise this grace, to reduce this purity to a habit, else the Scriptures would not have been so abundant in injunctions to this duty.

‘We must hate sin,’ says bishop Jeremy Taylor, ‘in all its dimensions, in all its distances, and in every angle of its reception.’ St. Paul felt this

scrupulousness of Christian delicacy to such an extent, that, in intimating the commission of certain enormities to the church of Ephesus, he charged that *they should not be so much as named among them*. This great master in the science of human nature, a knowledge perfected by grace, was aware that the very mention of some sins might be a temptation to commit them; he would not have the mind intimate with the expression, nor the tongue familiar with the sound. He who knew all the minuter entrances, as well as the broader avenues to the corrupt heart of man, knew how much safer it is to avoid than to combat, how much easier the retreat than victory. He was aware, that purity of heart and thought, could alone produce purity of life and conduct.

From the unhappy want of this early habit of restraint, many, who are become sincerely pious, find it very difficult to extricate their minds from certain associations established by former habits. Corrupt books and evil communications have at once left a sense of abhorrence on their hearts, with an indelible impression on their memory. They find it almost impossible to get rid of sallies of imagination, which, though they once admired as wit, they now consider as little less than blasphemy. The will rejects them; but they cling to the recollection with fatal pertinacity. Vices, not only of the conduct, but of the imagination, long indulged, leave a train of almost inextinguishable corruptions behind them. These are evils of which even the reformed heart does not easily get clear. He who repents suddenly, will too often be purified slowly. A corrupt practice may be abolished, but a soiled imagination is not easily cleansed.

We repeat, that these rooted habits, even after

the act has been long hated and discontinued, may persist in tormenting him who has long repented of the sin, so as to keep him to the last in a painful and distressing doubt as to his real state; but if this doubt continue to make him more vigilant, and to keep alive his humility, the uneasiness it causes may be more salutary than a greater confidence of his own condition. Many have complained, after years of sincere reformation, that they did not possess that peace and consolation which religion promises; not suspecting that their long adherence to wrong habits may naturally darken their views and cloud their enjoyments. Surely the man whose mind has abandoned itself for years to improper indulgences, has little right to complain, if bitterness accompany his repentance, if dejection break in on his peace. Surely he has little right to murmur, if those consolations are refused to him, which, in the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, are sometimes withheld from good men, who have never been guilty of his irregularities in conduct, who have never indulged his disorders of heart and mind. When we see holy men, to whom this cheerful confidence is sometimes denied, or from whom, in the agonies of dissolving nature, it is withdrawn, shall they whose case we have been considering, complain, if theirs are not all halcyon days, if their closing hour is rather contrite than triumphant? But this, if it be not a state of joy, may be equally a state of safety.

The duty of keeping up this sense of purity is of great extent. One of the many uses of prayer is, that, by the habit of breathing out our inmost thoughts to God, the sense of his being, the consciousness of his presence, the idea that his pure

eye is immediately upon us, imparts a temporary purity to the soul, which it vainly aims to maintain in an equal degree in its intercourse with mankind. The beatitude of the promised vision of God is more immediately annexed to this grace; and it is elsewhere said, 'that every one who hath this hope, purifieth himself, as He is pure.' The holy felicity of the creature is thus made to depend on its assimilation with the Creator. There is a beautiful intimation of the purity of God in the order of construction in the prayer taught by our Saviour. We pray that *his name may be hallowed*, that is, that our hearts, and the hearts of all men, may honor his holy name; may be deeply impressed with a sense of his purity and holiness, before we proceed to the subsequent petitions. We thus invest our minds with this preparatory sentiment, in order to sanctify what we are about to implore. In addition to the necessity of stated prayer for the promotion of purity, it may be observed, that if, by habitual devotion, we bend our thoughts into that course, they will, in time, almost voluntarily pursue it. The good effect of prayer will, on our return to society, be much increased by the practice of occasionally darting up to heaven a short ejaculation, a laudatory sentence, or some brief spontaneous effusion. This will assist to stir up the flame which was kindled by the morning sacrifice, and preserve it from total extinction before that of the evening is offered up. We may learn from the profane practice of some, that an ejaculation takes as little time, and obtrudes less on notice, than an oath or an exclamation. It implores in as few words the same divine power for a blessing, whom the other obtests for destruction.

One great benefit of science is allowed to be derived from its habituating the mind to shake off its dependence upon sense. Devout meditation, in like manner, accustoms it not to fly for support to sensible and material things, but to rest in such as are intellectual and spiritual. By a general neglect of serious thinking, virtue is sometimes withered and decayed; in minds where it is not torn up by the roots, there remains in them that vital sap which may still, upon habitual cultivation, not only vegetate, but produce fruit.

One great obstacle to habitual meditation must not be passed over. It is the pernicious custom of submitting to the uncontrolled dominion of a roving imagination. This prolific faculty produces such a constant budding of images, fancies, visions, conjectures, and conceits, that she can subsist plentifully on her own independent stock. She is perpetually wandering from the point to which she promised to confine herself when she set out; is ever roaming from the spot to which her powerless possessor had threatened to pin her down. We retire with a resolution to reflect: Reason has no sooner marshalled her forces, than this undisciplined run-away escapes from duty, one straggler after another joins the enemy, or brings home some foreign impertinence. While we meant to indulge only a harmless reflection, we are brought under subjection to a whole series of reveries of different characters and opposite descriptions. Fresh trains obliterate our first speculations, till the spirit sinks into a sort of deliquium. We have nothing for it, but resolutely to resist the enfeebling despot. Let us stir up some counteracting force: let us fly to some active employment which shall break the charm, and dissolve the pleasant

thralldom. No matter what, so it be innocent and apposite. We shall not cure ourselves by the sturdiest resolution not to do this thing which is complained of, unless we compel ourselves to do something else. Courageous exertion is the only conqueror of irresolution; vigorous action the only supplanter of idle speculation.

Habits are not arbitrary systems and predetermined schemes. They are not always laid down deliberately as plans to be pursued, but steal upon us insensibly; insinuate themselves into a train of successive repetitions, till we find ourselves in bondage to them, before we are aware they have gotten any fast hold over us. But if rooted bad habits are of such difficult extirpation, that, as we have already observed, they not only destroy the peace of him who continues them, but embitter the very penitence of him who has forsaken them, there is a class of beings in whom they are not yet inveterate. If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, never could they be employed to a more important purpose, than in representing to my youthful readers the blessedness of avoiding such habits now, as may take a whole life to unlearn.

O you to whom opening life is fresh, and gay, and tempting! you who have yet your path to choose, whose hearts are ingenuous, and whose manners amiable; in whom, if wrong propensities discover themselves, yet evil habits are not substantially formed—could you be made sensible, at a less costly price than your own experience, that though, through the mercy of God, the long-erring heart may hereafter be brought to abhor its own sin, yet the once initiated mind can never be



made to unknow its knowledge, nor to unthink its thoughts; can never be brought to separate those combinations which it once too fondly cherished:—how much future regret, how much incurable sorrow, might you spare yourselves! If you would but reflect, that though, in respect of the past, you may become inwardly penitent, you cannot become as you now are, outwardly innocent, and that no repentance can restore your present happy ignorance of practised evil,—you would then keep clear of a bondage from which you perceive the older and the wiser do not, because they cannot, commonly emancipate themselves.

But, supposing a young man is so happy as to escape the grosser corruptions, yet, if he have a turn to wit and ridicule, he should be singularly on his guard against the false credit which ludicrous associations will obtain for him in certain societies. An indelicate but pointed jest, a combination of some light thought with some scriptural expression, a parody which makes a serious thing ridiculous, or a sober one absurd,—these are instruments by no means harmless, not only to him who handles them, but also in the hands of subalterns and copyists, who having, perhaps, no faculty but memory, and seldom using memory but for mischief, retain with joy, and circulate from vanity, what was at first uttered with mere random thoughtlessness. Profane dunces are the busy echoes of the loose wit of others. With little talent for original mischief, but devoting that little to the worst purposes, they pick up a kind of literary livelihood on the stray sarcasms and fugitive bon mots of others, and are maintained on what the witty throw away. If even in the first instance

there were nothing wrong in the thing itself, there is mischief in the connexion. Whatever serves to append a light thought to a serious one, is unsafe: both have, by frequent citation, been so accustomed to appear together, that when, in a better frame of mind, the good one is called up, the corrupt associate never fails to present itself unbidden, and, like Pharaoh's blasted corn, devours the wholesome ear.

'Man,' says one of the most sagacious observers of man, Dr. Paley, 'is a bundle of habits.' The more we attend to them, the more distinctly we shall perceive those which are right, and the more dexterity we shall acquire in establishing them. In setting out in our moral course, we can make little progress, unless we suffer ourselves to be governed by certain rules; but when the rules are once worked into habits, they in a manner govern us. We lose the sense of that restraining power which was at first unpleasant, though self-imposed. To illustrate this by an instance:—The accomplished orator is not fettered by recurring to the laws of the grammarian, nor the canons of the dialectician, though it was by being habitually trained in their respective schools, that he acquired both his accuracy and argument. Yet, while he is speaking, it never occurs to him that there are such things in the world as grammar and logic. The rules are become habits, they have answered their end, and are dismissed.

If we consider the force of habit on amusements: stated diversions enslave us more by the custom of making us feel the want of them, than by any positive pleasure they afford. By being incessantly pursued, they diminish in their power

of delighting; yet such is the plastic power of habit, and such the yielding substance of our minds, that they become arbitrary wants, absolute articles, not of luxury, but necessity. Strange! that what is enjoyed without pleasure, cannot be discontinued without pain! The very hour when, the place where, the sight of those with whom they have been partaken, present associations which we feel a kind of difficulty and uneasiness in separating. We are partly cheated into this imaginary necessity, by seeing the eagerness with which others pursue them. Yet if it were not an artificial necessity, a want not arising from the constitution of our nature, those would be unhappy who are deprived of them, or rather, who never enjoyed them. There is a respectable society of Christians among us, who carry the restriction of diversions to the widest extent. Yet among the number of amiable, virtuous, and well-instructed young Quakers, whom I have known, I have always found them as cheerful and as happy as other people. Their cheerfulness was perhaps more intellectual than mirthful; but their happiness never appeared to be impeded by complaints at the privation of pleasures to which habit had not enslaved them—a habit which, when carried too far, destroys the very end of pleasure, that of invigorating the mind by relaxing it.

It is a proof that the Apostle considered conversion in general a gradual transformation, when he spoke of the renewing of the inward man *day by day*; this seems to intimate that good habits, under the influence of the Spirit of God, are continually advancing the growth of the Christian, and conducting him to that maturity which is his

consummation and reward. The grace of repentance, like every other, must be established by habit. Repentance is not completed by a single act; it must be incorporated into our mind, till it become a fixed state, arising from a continual sense of our need of it.—*Forgive us our trespasses* would never have been enjoined as a daily petition, if daily repentance had not been necessary for daily sins. The grand work of repentance, indeed, accompanies the change of heart; but that which is purified will not, in this state of imperfection, necessarily remain pure.—While we are liable to sin, we must be habitually penitent.

A man may give evidence of his possessing many amiable qualities, without our being able to say, therefore, he is a good man. His virtues may be constitutional, their motives may be worldly. But when he exhibits clear and convincing evidence, that he has subdued all his inveterate bad habits, weeded out rooted evil propensities; when the miser is grown largely liberal, the passionate become meek, the calumniator charitable, the malignant kind; when every bad habit is not only eradicated, but succeeded by its opposite quality, we would conclude that such a change could only be effected by power from on high, we would not scruple to call that man religious. But above all, there must be a change wrought in the secret course of our thoughts; without this interior improvement, the abandonment of any wrong practice is no proof of an effectual alteration. This, indeed, we can not make a rule by which to judge others, but it is an infallible one by which to judge ourselves. Certain faults are the effect of certain temptations, rather than of that common depravity

natural to all. But a general rectification of thought, a sensible revolution in the secret desires and imaginations of the heart, is perhaps the least equivocal of all the changes effected in us. This is not merely the cure of a particular disease, but the infusion of a sound principle of life and health, the general feeling of a renovated nature, the evidence of a new state of constitution.

Candid Christians, however, who know experimentally the power of habit, who are aware of the remainders of evil in the best men, will not rashly pronounce that he, who, while he is struggling with some long-cherished corruption, falls into an occasional aberration from the path he is endeavoring to follow, is therefore not religious.

If our bad habits have arisen from dangerous associations, we must dissolve the intercourse, if we would obviate the danger. Good impressions may have been made on the heart, yet the indulged thought, and especially the allowed sight of that object which once melted down our better resolutions, may melt them again. If we would conquer an invading enemy, we must not only fight him in the field, but cut off his provisions. It may be difficult, but nothing should repel the effort but what is impossible. Now in this there is no impossibility, because the thing not being placed out of our reach, there needs only the concurrence of the will. If we humor this wayward will, it is at our peril. What we persist in indulging, we shall every day find more difficult to restrain. Perhaps on our not resisting the very next temptation, will depend the future color of our life—the very possibility of future resistance. That which is now in our power, may, by repeated rejection, be judi-

cially placed beyond it. Infirmity of purpose produces perpetual relapses.—Temptation strengthens as resistance weakens. We create, by criminal indulgences, an imbecility in the will, and then plead the weakness, not which we found, but made.—Half measures produce more pain and no success. They are compounded of desire and regret, of appetite and fear, of indulgence and remorse. While we are balancing, conditioning, temporizing, negotiating with conscience, we might be singing *Te Deum* for the victory.

What force we take from the will by every repetition, we give to the habit. A faint endeavor ends in a sure defeat. Temptation becoming more importunate, if its incursions are not resisted, if its attacks are not repelled, the habit will get final possession of the mind; encouragement will invite repetition; where it has been once entertained, it will find a ready way; where it has been received with familiarity, expulsion will soon become difficult, and afterwards impossible. The Holy Spirit, whose aid perhaps we have faintly invoked, and firmly rejected, is withdrawn. But if we are sincere in the invocation, we shall be firm in the resistance; if we are fervent in the resolution, we shall be triumphant in the conflict.

What we have insisted on is the more important, because all progressive goodness consists in habits; and virtuous habits, begun and carried on here with increasing improvement and multiplied energies, are susceptible of eternal proficiency. When we are assured that the effect of habits will not cease with life, but be carried into eternity, it gives such an enlargement to the ideas, such an

expansion to the soul, that it seems as if every hour were lost in which we are not beginning or improving some virtuous habit.

As we were originally made in the image of God; so shall we, by the renovation of our minds, of which our improved habits is the best test, be restored, in an enlargement of our moral powers, to a nearer resemblance of Him. Were it not that there is a participation, in all rational minds, of the same qualities in kind, though infinitely different in degree, the perfections of God would not so repeatedly be held out in Scripture as objects of our imitation. It would have been absurd to have said, ‘as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy.’ ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy,’ would not have been a reasonable command, unless holiness and purity had been one common moral quality of the nature, though unspeakably distant in the proportion between that perfect Being from whom whatever is good is derived, and the imperfect creature who derives it. Surely it is not too much to say, that though we can only attain that low measure, of which our weak and sinful nature is capable, yet still to aim at imitating those perfections, is a desire natural to the renewed heart: and it may be considered as a symptom that no such renovation has taken place, when no such desire is felt.

How could we attempt to trace the perfections of the divine nature, if he had not stamped on our mind some idea of those perfections? We may bring these notions practically home to our own bosoms, possessing, as we do, not only natural ideas of the divine rectitude, but having these notions highly rectified, and confirmed by the Scrip

ture representation of God ; if, instead of adopting abstract reason for a rule of judging, which is often too unsubstantial for our grasp, we set ourselves to consider what such a perfect Being is likely to approve, or condemn, in human conduct, and then comparing not only our deductions, but our practice with the gospel, adopt or reject what that approves or condemns.

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### MUTABILITY OF HUMAN OPINIONS.

*The fashion of the world passeth away*, as the opinions, ideas, and manners of men are always changing. We look in vain for a standard to ascertain and fix any of these ; in vain expect that what has been approved and established for a while is always to endure. Principles which were of high authority among our ancestors are now exploded. Systems of philosophy, which were once universally received and taught as infallible truths, are now obliterated and forgotten. Modes of living, behaving, and employing time ; the pursuits of the busy, and the entertainments of the gay, have been entirely changed. They were the offspring of fashion, the children of a day. When they had run their course they expired, and were succeeded by other modes of living, and thinking, and acting, which the gloss of novelty recommended for a while to the public taste.

When we read an account of the manners and occupations, of the studies and opinions, even of our own countrymen in some remote age, we seem to be reading the history of a different world from what we now inhabit. Coming downwards through



some generations, a new face of things appears. Men begin to think and act in a different train, and what we call refinement gradually opens. Arriving at our own times, we consider ourselves as having widely enlarged the sphere of knowledge on every side ; having formed just ideas on every subject ; having attained the proper standard of manners and behaviour ; and wonder at the ignorance, the uncouthness, and rusticity of our forefathers. But, alas ! what appears to us so perfect shall, in its turn, pass away. The next race, while they shove us off the stage, will introduce their favorite discoveries and innovations ; and what we now admire as the height of improvement may, in a few ages hence, be considered as altogether rude and imperfect. As one wave effaces the ridge which the former had made on the sand by the sea shore, so every succeeding age obliterates the opinions and modes of the age which had gone before it. *The fashion of the world* is ever passing away.

Let us only think of the changes which our own ideas and opinions undergo in the progress of life. One man differs not more from another than the same man varies from himself in different periods of his age, and in different situations of fortune. In youth and in opulence, everything appears smiling and gay. We fly as on the wings of fancy ; and survey beauties wherever we cast our eye. But let some more years have passed over our heads, or let disappointments in the world have depressed our spirits ; and what a change takes place ! The pleasing illusions that once shone before us ; the splendid fabrics that imagination had reared ; the enchanting maze in which we once wandered

with delight : all vanish, and are forgotten. The world itself remains the same. But its form, its appearance, and aspect, are changed to our view ; its *fashion*, as to us, hath *passed away*.

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### MUTABILITY OF EXTERNAL THINGS.

WHILE our opinions and ideas are thus changing within, the condition of all external things is, at the same time, ever changing without us and around us. Wherever we cast our eyes, over the face of nature, or the monuments of art, we discern the marks of alteration and vicissitude. We can not travel far upon the earth without being presented with many a striking memorial of the changes made by time. What was once a flourishing city is now a neglected village. Where castles and palaces stood, fallen towers and ruined walls appear. Where the magnificence of the great shone, and the mirth of the gay resounded ; there, as the prophet Isaiah describes, *the owl and the raven now dwell, thorns come up, and the nettle and the bramble grow in the courts*.—When we read the history of nations, what do we read but the history of incessant revolution and change ? We behold kingdoms alternately rising and falling ; peace and war take place by turns ; princes, heroes, and statesmen, coming forth in succession on the stage, attracting our attention for a little by the splendid figure they make, and then disappearing and forgotten. We see the *fashion of the world* assuming all its different forms, and in all of them *passing away*.

But to historical annals there is no occasion for

our having recourse. Let any one who has made some progress in life recollect only what he has beheld passing before him in his own time. We have seen our country rise triumphant among the nations ; and we have seen it also humbled in its turn. We have seen in one hemisphere of the globe new dominions acquired, and in another hemisphere our old dominions lost. At home we have seen factions and parties shift through all their different forms ; and administrations, in succession, rise and fall. What were once the great themes of eager discussion and political contest are now forgotten. Fathers recount them to their children as the tales of other times. New actors have come forth on the stage of the world. New objects have attracted the attention, and new intrigues engaged the passions of men. New members fill the seats of justice ; new ministers the temples of religion ; and a new world, in short, in the course of a few years, has gradually and insensibly risen around us.

When from the public scene we turn our eye to our own private connexions, the changes which have taken place in the *fashion of the world* must touch every reflecting mind with a more tender sensibility. For where are now many of the companions of our early years ; many of those with whom we first began the race of life ; and whose hopes and prospects were once the same with our own ? In recollecting our old acquaintance and friends, what devastations have been made by the hand of time ! On the ruins of our former connexions, new ones have arisen ; new relations have been formed ; and the circle of those among whom we live is altogether changed from what it once was. Comparing our present situation with our

former condition of life; looking back to our father's house, and to the scenes of youth; remembering the friends by whom we were trained, and the family in which we grew up; who but with inward emotion, recollects those days of former years, and is disposed to drop the silent tear, when he views *the fashion of the world* thus always *passing away*!

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### UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE.

Not only our connexions with all things around us change, but our own life, through all its stages and conditions, is ever passing away. How just and how affecting is that image, employed in the sacred writings to describe the state of man, *we spend our years as a tale that is told*! Psalm xc. 9. It is not to anything great or lasting that human life is compared; not to a monument that is built, or to an inscription that is engraven; not even to a book that is written, or to a history that is recorded, but to a *tale*, which is listened to for a little; where the words are fugitive and passing, and where one incident succeeds and hangs on another, till by insensible transitions we are brought to the close; a *tale*, which in some passages may be amusing, in others tedious; but whether it amuses or fatigues, is soon told and soon forgotten. Thus year steals upon us after year. Life is never standing still for a moment; but continually though insensibly sliding into a new form. Infancy rises up fast to childhood; childhood to youth; youth passes quickly into manhood; and the gray hair and the faded look

are not long of admonishing us that old age is at hand. In this course all generations run. The world is made up of unceasing rounds of transitory existence. Some generations are coming forward into being, and others hastening to leave it. The stream which carries us along is ever flowing with a quick current, though with a still and noiseless course. The dwelling-place of man is continually emptying, and by a fresh succession of inhabitants, continually filling anew. *The memory of man passeth away like the remembrance of a guest who hath tarried but one night.*

As the life of man, considered in its duration, thus fleets and passes away, so, during the time it lasts, its condition is perpetually changing. It affords us nothing on which we can set up our rest; no enjoyment or possession which we can properly call our own. When we have begun to be placed in such circumstances as we desired, and wish our lives to proceed in the same agreeable tenor, how often comes some unexpected event across to disconcert all our schemes of happiness? Our health declines; our friends die; our families are scattered; something or other is not long of occurring to show that the wheel must turn round; *the fashion of the world must pass away.* Is there any man who dares to look to futurity with an eye of confident hope; and to say that, against a year hence, he can promise being in the same condition of health or fortune as he is at present? The seeds of change are everywhere sown in our state; and the very causes that seemed to promise us security are often secretly undermining it. Great fame provokes the attacks of envy and reproach. High health gives occasion to intemperance and disease. The elevation of the mighty

never fails to render their condition tottering ; and that obscurity which shelters the mean, exposes them, at the same time, to become the prey of oppression. So completely is the *fashion of this world* made by Providence for change, and prepared for *passing away*. In the midst of this instability, it were some comfort, did human prosperity decay as slowly as it rises. By slow degrees, and by many intervening steps, it rises. But one day is sufficient to scatter and bring it to naught.

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#### THE WORLD PASSES AWAY.

THE world itself in which we dwell, the basis of all our present enjoyments, is itself contrived for change, and designed to pass away. While the generations of men come forth in their turns, like troops of succeeding pilgrims, to act their part on this globe, the globe on which they act is tottering under their feet. It was once overflowed by a deluge. It is shaken by earthquakes ; it is undermined by subterraneous fires ; it carries many a mark of having suffered violent convulsions, and of tending to dissolution. Revelation informs us that there is a day approaching, in which *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise ; the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; and the earth and the works therein shall be burnt up*. When this destined hour arrives, the *fashion of the world* shall have finally *passed away*. Immortal spirits shall then look back upon this world, as we do at present on cities and empires which were once mighty and flourishing, but now are swept from existence, and their place is no more to be found.

## VIRTUE UNCHANGEABLE.

I SHALL insist no longer on this representation of things. Enough has been said to show that the *fashion of the world*, in every sense, *passes away*. Opinions and manners, public affairs and private concerns, the life of man, the conditions of fortune, and the earth itself on which we dwell, are all changing around us.—Is every thing then, with which we are connected, passing and transitory? Is the whole state of man no more than a dream or fleeting vision? Is he brought forth to be only the child of a day? Are we thrown into a river where all flows, and nothing stays; where we have no means of resisting the current, nor can reach any firm ground on which to rest our foot?—No, my brethren, man was not doomed to be so unhappy; nor made by his Creator so much in vain. There are three fixed and permanent objects to which I must call your attention, as the great supports of human constancy amidst this fugitive state. Though this world changes and passes away, virtue and goodness never change; God never changes; heaven and immortality pass not away.

*First*, Virtue and goodness never change. Let opinions and manners, conditions and situations, in public and in private life, alter as they will, virtue is ever the same. It rests on the immovable basis of Eternal Truth. Among all the revolutions of human things, it maintains its ground; ever possessing the veneration and esteem of mankind, and conferring on the heart which enjoys it satisfaction and peace. Consult the most remote antiquity. Look to the most savage nations of the

earth. How wild and how fluctuating soever the ideas of men may have been, this opinion you will find to have always prevailed, that probity, truth, and beneficence form the honor and excellency of man. In this the philosopher and the savage, the warrior and the hermit, join. At this altar all have worshipped. Their offerings may have been unseemly. Their notions of virtue may have been rude, and occasionally tainted by ignorance and superstition; but the fundamental ideas of moral worth have ever remained the same.

Here then is one point of stability, affected by no vicissitudes of time and life, on which we may rest. Our fortunes may change, and our friends may die; but virtue may still be our own; and as long as this remains, we are never miserable. *Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* Job, xxvii. 5, 6. He who, with the holy man of old, can hold this language, may with undisturbed mind survey time flying away, life decaying, and the whole fashion of the world changing around him. He hath within himself a source of consolation and hope, independent of all earthly objects. Every terrestrial glory sparkles only for a little with transient brightness. But virtue shines with eternal and unalterable splendor. It derives its origin from heaven; and partakes both of the lustre and the stability of celestial objects. *It is the brightness of the everlasting light; the unspotted mirror of God, and the image of his goodness.*



## IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

IN the *second* place, God never changes. Amidst the unceasing vicissitudes of earthly things, there remains at the head of the universe an Eternal Protector of virtue, whose *throne is established for ever*. With him there is *no variableness, neither any shadow of turning*; no inconsistency of purpose, and no decay of wisdom or of power. We know that he loved righteousness from the beginning of days, and that he will continue to love it unalterably to the last. Foreseen by him was every revolution which the course of ages has produced. All the changes which happen in the state of nature, or the life of men, were comprehended in his decree. How much soever worldly things may change in themselves, they are all united in his plan; they constitute one great system or whole, of which he is the Author; and which, at its final completion, shall appear to be perfect. His dominion holds together in a continued chain the successive variety of human events; gives stability to things that in themselves are fluctuating; gives constancy even to the *fashion of the world* while it is *passing away*. Wherefore, though all things change on earth, and we ourselves be involved in the general mutability, yet as long as, with trust and hope, we look up to the Supreme Being, we rest on the *rock of ages*, and are safe amidst every change. We possess a fortress to which we can have recourse in all dangers; a refuge under all storms; *a dwelling-place in all generations*.

## CERTAINTY OF HEAVEN AND IMMORTALITY.

IN the *third* and last place, Heaven and immortality pass not away. The fleeting scenes of this life are to be considered no more than an introduction to a nobler and more permanent order of things, when man shall have attained the maturity of his being. This is what reason gave some ground to expect; what revelation has fully confirmed; and, in confirming it, has agreed with the sentiments and anticipations of the good and wise in every age. We are taught to believe that what we now behold is only the first stage of the life of man. We are arrived no farther than the threshold; we dwell as in the outer courts of existence. Here tents only are pitched; tabernacles erected for the sojourners of a day. But in the region of eternity, all is great, stable, and unchanging. There the *mansions* of the just are prepared; there the *city which hath foundations* is built; there is established the kingdom *which can not be moved*. Here everything is in stir and fluctuation; because here good men continue not, but pass onward in the course of being. There all is serene, steady, and orderly; because there remaineth the final *rest of the people of God*. Here all is corrupted by our folly and guilt, and of course must be transient and vain. But there, purchased by the death, and secured by the resurrection of the Son of God, is an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*. There reigns that tranquillity which is never troubled. There shines that sun which never sets. There flows that river of pleasures which is always unruffled and pure.

## RETROSPECTION.

It is a remarkable peculiarity in the retrospect of former life, that it is commonly attended with some measure of heaviness of heart. Even to the most prosperous the memory of joys that are passed is accompanied with secret sorrow. In the days of former years, many objects arise to view, which make the most unthinking grave; and render the serious sad. The pleasurable scenes of youth, the objects on which our affections had been early placed, the companions and friends with whom we had spent many happy days, even the places and the occupations to which we have been long accustomed, but to which we have now bidden farewell, can hardly ever be recalled, without softening, nor sometimes without piercing the heart. Such sensations, to which few, if any, of my readers are wholly strangers, I now mention, as affording a strong proof of that vanity of the human state which is so often represented in the sacred writings: and vain indeed must that state be, where the shades of grief tinge the recollection of its brightest scenes. But, at the same time, though it be very proper that such meditations should sometimes enter the mind, yet on them I advise not the gentle and tender heart to dwell too long. They are apt to produce a fruitless melancholy; to deject, without bringing much improvement; to thicken the gloom which already hangs over human life, without furnishing proportionable assistance to virtue.

Let me advise you rather to recall to view such parts of former conduct, if any such there be, as afford in the remembrance a rational satisfaction. And what parts of conduct are these? Are they

the pursuits of sensual pleasure, the riots of jollity, or the displays of show and vanity? No: I appeal to your hearts, my friends, if what you recollect with most pleasure be not the innocent, the virtuous, the honorable parts of your past life; when you were employed in cultivating your minds, and improving them with useful knowledge; when, by regular application and persevering labor, you were laying the foundation of future reputation and advancement; when you were occupied in discharging with fidelity the duties of your station, and acquiring the esteem of the worthy and the good; when, in some trying situation, you were enabled to act your part with firmness and honor; or had seized the happy opportunity of assisting the deserving, or relieving the distressed, and bringing down upon your heads the  *blessings of those that were ready to perish.*—These, these are the parts of former life which are recalled with most satisfaction! On them alone no heaviness of heart attends. You enjoy them as a treasure which is now stored up, and put beyond all danger of being lost. These cheer the hours of sadness, lighten the burden of old age, and, through the mortifying remembrance of much of the past, dart a ray of light and joy.—From the review of these, and the comparison of them with the deceitful pleasures of sin, let us learn how to form our estimate of happiness. Let us learn what is true, and what is false, in human pleasures; and from experience of the past judge of the quarter to which we must in future turn, if we would lay a foundation for permanent happiness.



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## REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

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